

Egypt arrests 4 over kidney trafficking

CAIRO (AFP) — Police have dismantled a data bank specialising in organ trafficking and arrested four people who helped wealthy Arabs and other foreigners obtain kidneys from Egyptians, a government newspaper said Sunday. The data bank-laboratory in downtown Cairo had on file the names of 1,500 people willing to sell their kidneys, contacts with potential foreign buyers and fake documents to show they were Egyptians, Al Akhbar said. Egyptian law prohibits the transplant of organs from Egyptian patients to foreign nationals. On Saturday the opposition daily Al Wafd reported that a Libyan man had spent more than \$50,000 at the data bank-laboratory to obtain fake documents, pay a kidney donor as well as a surgeon to obtain the vital organ.

South Lebanon truce panel meets to examine complaint against Israel

NAQOURA (AFP) — A meeting of the five-nation committee monitoring a ceasefire accord in southern Lebanon opened Sunday to examine a Lebanese complaint against Israel. Representatives of France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States met at the U.N. headquarters in the town of Naqoura on the Israel-Lebanon border for the 11th time this year. Lebanon filed a protest with the committee following the death of a Lebanese civilian in a bomb blast Wednesday near the self-declared Israeli "security zone" in southern Lebanon. Hizbollah accused Israeli troops of detonating a remote-controlled bomb in what the Lebanese authorities termed a violation of an April 1996 accord which calls on all sides to avoid civilian casualties. The April 26 truce put an end to Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" offensive against anti-Israeli guerrillas in southern Lebanon which left 175 people dead, mostly civilians. The truce panel was set up to monitor compliance with the agreement.

Syria accuses Israel of killing U.N. soldiers in Golan

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria accused the Israeli secret service Mossad Saturday of killing two Austrian U.N. soldiers on the Golan Heights last month. Officials quoted Defence Minister Lieutenant-General Mustafa Tlas as telling an Austrian military delegation that preliminary investigations showed Mossad was behind the killing of Warrant Officer Wolfgang Grasser and Master Corporal Gerhard Karitschnig. The two Austrians served with their country's contingent of 400-military observers in UNDOF, the United Nations force which has been stationed in the Golan Heights since Israel and Syria pulled troops back from the front line after the 1973 Middle East war. They were on foot patrol about eight kilometres inside Syrian-controlled territory when they were killed around midday on May 30. Israel denied it was involved and an Israeli security source told Reuters in Jerusalem that smugglers were active in the area.

Israel grants pay bonus to officers serving in Lebanon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has granted a pay hike to all regular army officers serving in the Israeli-occupied buffer zone in south Lebanon in a show of appreciation for the soldiers' high-risk service, officials said Sunday. An army spokesman said the 1,000 shekel (\$300) monthly pay increase was being paid as of June in the form of a hardship bonus to all career officers serving in south Lebanon. A mid-level officer in the army takes home around 4,000 shekels (\$1,200) per month. The pay hike was announced shortly after Israel marked the 15th anniversary of its June 6, 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Israel withdrew its troops from most of Lebanon three years later after losing more than 600 soldiers. Since the withdrawal, the Israeli army and an allied Lebanese militia have continued to occupy a buffer zone in south Lebanon.



Crowds cheer His Majesty King Hussein as his procession enters the northern city of Irbid Sunday. A citizen hands the King an Arabian sword, which he raised for all to see (Photo by Youssef 'Allan')

Irbid masses take to streets welcoming King and Queen

Monarch warns against 'who tend to exploit democracy to ruin it, use freedom to spoil it'

IRBID (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein warned Sunday that the "circumstances surrounding Jordan today require from each and everyone of us to be fully alert and vigilant so that the country can remain a strong fortress steadfast in the face of challenges and dangers."

Addressing a public rally held at the Jordan University of Science and Technology in Irbid, King Hussein warned against those who he said "tend to exploit democracy only to ruin it and use freedom only to spoil it."

"I don't know why some people insist on believing

that this country constitutes a weak link and think that Jordan would accept to do things that are not in the interest of the Arabs and therefore it has to pay the price one way or another," the King asked. "I hope their designs will never come true," he said at the meeting attended by Her Majesty Queen Noor, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and other high ranking officials.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the performance of the press, the King singled out columnists for dwelling on the same topics over and over again.

"One reads columnists' articles cursing America one day, President Clinton on another, Turkey the next day, (Israeli Prime Minister) Netanyahu on a third day and so on, in addition to cursing the state, the government, the performance of the government... all without any objective reasoning and without defining the problems or exerting positive efforts to address these problems; in addition to articles that harm Jordan's relations with the other Arab countries."

The King said that "some elements" act against the interests of the country.

"Some of those who hold allegiance to and connections with parties outside Jordan, and their actions, bad in the past brought us to the brink of catastrophe and caused us setbacks which made us suffer for long years."

Referring to the Jordanian professional unions he said: "We have to examine the situation and reach a decision. Only a few members of these unions take part in the election of their representatives in their respective unions while the remaining majority are continually involved in their

operation. The PKK says its losses are less than 100. The secretary general of the Turkish army's general staff, Major-General Erol Ozkarsnak, said Friday that the operation would continue "until the terrorists are eradicated" and the army was in control of the region used by the PKK.

Mr. Erbakan has had several recent confrontations with Turkey's powerful military chiefs over their resistance to his pro-Islamic party's policies.

Erbakan says Turkish incursion in Iraq over

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's military incursion in northern Iraq against Kurdish separatist guerrillas has ended, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan said Sunday, according to the Anadolu news agency.

The agency said Mr. Erbakan made the announcement during a meeting of his Welfare Party.

No confirmation was immediately available from military sources in Ankara, and journalists near the

Iraqi border area said no unusual troop movement suggesting a withdrawal had been seen.

The incursion, which began May 14, involved more than 25,000 Turkish troops backed by tanks and air power bunting and "eradicating" militant Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) members over the border.

According to Turkish figures, more than 2,200 PKK rebels and 95 Turkish troops had been killed in fighting in the one-month

operation. The PKK says its losses are less than 100. The secretary general of the Turkish army's general staff, Major-General Erol Ozkarsnak, said Friday that the operation would continue "until the terrorists are eradicated" and the army was in control of the region used by the PKK.

Mr. Erbakan has had several recent confrontations with Turkey's powerful military chiefs over their resistance to his pro-Islamic party's policies.

Israelis and Palestinians hold crucial Cairo talks

CAIRO (AFP) — Israeli and Palestinian negotiators held a crucial meeting here Sunday to try to convene a summit between their leaders and resume peace negotiations that have been frozen for nearly three months.

The meeting will try to build the foundations for the resumption of negotiations and there is hope it will achieve this goal, "Israel's ambassador" to Egypt, Zvi Mazel, said

before the talks got underway. A member of the Palestinian delegation said the negotiators aimed to prepare a summit between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Sunday's meeting is the first between the two sides' negotiators since March, when the Palestinians broke off peace talks in protest at

work on a new Jewish settlement in occupied east Jerusalem.

However it took place only after a last-minute dispute over Jewish settlements was cleared up. Israel delayed the departure of its negotiating team by two hours after a Palestinian spokesman said the Jewish state had agreed to freeze settlement building in occupied areas in return

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Palestinian attorney general under house arrest for corruption

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian Attorney General Khaled Kidreh, who resigned last week, is suspected of having accepted bribes, a top Palestinian official said Sunday. A human rights activist said Mr. Kidreh was being confined to his home by authorities.

The affair comes amid growing concerns about corruption in Yasser Arafat's three-year-old Palestinian autonomy government.

Bassam Eid, a top Palestinian human rights activist, told the Associated Press that Mr. Kidreh was under house arrest and that his passport and identity papers had been confiscated.

Brig. Gen. Zakariya Baloushi, a top official of the Palestinian police in Gaza, did not confirm this directly but appeared to suggest it was true, saying: "It is better for him to be at home... We are protecting

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King, Arafat discuss latest peace initiative

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) on Sunday affirmed the need to continue consultations to push forward peace efforts on the Palestinian Israeli track, according to Jordan Television.

His Majesty King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat held a closed-door meeting and were later joined by officials from both sides.

President Arafat briefed King Hussein on the Egyptian move to revive the stalled peace talks.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) Executive Committee Secretary General Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian Presidency Secretary Al Tayyeb Abdul Rahim, as well as other senior Palestinian officials attended the meeting.

President Arafat arrived here Sunday evening on a working visit to Jordan for talks with King Hussein. Talks between the two leaders focused on the latest developments of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, bilateral relations and issues of mutual concern.

His Majesty King Hussein, who deeply appreciates what Prince Hassan described as the "dialogue of the sane," said he hoped that in this shrinking world, all peoples can look towards a reconciliation of civilisations.

Prince Hassan said, urging the promotion of scenarios of reconciliation among cultures. But "coming together in terms of scenarios of reconciliation include coming to terms with one's own phobias," the Crown Prince emphasised.

The Crown Prince, who had earlier proposed that the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) establish a council against discrimination against Islam, said the purpose of such dialogues is not to beautify the image of each other but to shoulder the responsibility of being proactive and

speaking in an idiom which is understood by the other. He pointed to the contradiction in promoting an Islamic threat when over 75 per cent of the world refugee population is Muslims.

The Crown Prince also said that loyalty to Islamic values dictate that "we speak in centrist terms" because Islam promotes a centrist path.

"What we are trying to do here in this dialogue of the sane is not only curse the darkness but also light a candle. We are, in a responsible manner, trying to contribute to a better world, if not for ourselves, then for our children."

Prince Hassan told the parliamentarians, who decided to explore expanding the participation in their

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Mutawi lists press excerpts in support of new press law

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government yesterday lashed back at opponents of the new Press and Publications Law, saying the amendments introduced last month were aimed at protecting the majority from the "chaos" that prevailed under the 1993 law.

In an unprecedented statement distributed for publication in newspapers, Minister of Information Samir Mutawi said a minority (opponents of the law) used their "loud voice" and "narrow self-interest" to drown the voice of the majority and their interests.

"Over the past three weeks... I have seen and heard all opinions... on the amendments," Dr. Mutawi said. "While the temperature of condemnations by the loud

voices was hot indeed, the sound of logic was hardly heard, since it naturally was neither emotional nor hard-hitting," he added.

"Citizens, who lived through the tragedy of chaos under the old law, know of enough examples of how that (piece of legislation) was abused," the minister said.

"The premise (of the amendments) is to protect public opinion and at the same time defend freedom of expression. Those who recognise no limits in infringing on freedoms of others reject (the amendments) because their loud voices cannot thrive except in a chaotic atmosphere."

Following are excerpts from the minister's statement:

Five arrested on attempt on Kuwaiti deputy's life

KUWAIT (AP) — The interior ministry announced Sunday that police have arrested three Kuwaitis and two Iranians suspected of the failed attempt on the life of parliament member Abdullah Nibari and his wife.

A statement from the ministry said the arrests were made less than 24 hours after the Friday night attack. The statement did not give details about the suspects. But a security official told the Associated Press they were in three cars, two of which took part in ambushing the opposition legislator and a third which took the

wounded couple to the hospital. The official spoke on condition of anonymity.

The ministry, which is responsible for internal security, said the suspects were referred to prosecutors. Kuwait and Iran have diplomatic relations, and many Iranians live in Kuwait.

The official Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) said Mr. Nibari, 59, was "much better" and the swelling in his jaw was subsiding. A bullet was removed from his jaw and another from his left shoulder.

The emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, who visited the lawmaker Saturday, ordered that he be sent abroad for treatment.

Mr. Nibari's wife, Firyal Freith, was in "excellent condition," KUNA said. She was shot in the shoulder.

The attempt on the life of the outspoken deputy shocked Kuwaitis. Political violence is rare in this small, oil-rich state.

Parliament Speaker Ahmad Saadoun said in a stormy session of the national assembly on Saturday that the attackers were the "thieves of public money" who believe they are "above the law."

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Netanyahu, Arafat speak by phone

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat spoke directly for the first time in more than three months over the weekend to arrange a meeting of the two sides' negotiators scheduled for Sunday, a Palestinian official said. The official, who asked not to be identified, said Mr. Netanyahu telephoned Mr. Arafat late Friday as the Palestinian leader was meeting with a senior Israeli negotiator, Yitzhak Molkho, to discuss ideas for resuming peace talks. No details of their conversation were given. Israeli Army Radio also reported the telephone conversation, but said it took place Saturday. Mr. Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu are not believed to have spoken directly since they last met in early February, before the Palestinians broke off peace talks.

Elections 'a real victory' for Algeria, Zeroual emphasises

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian President Liamine Zeroual hailed last week's general elections as a triumph, as he received members of the CNISEL, an independent commission responsible for overseeing the vote.

"The success of the legislative elections is a real

victory for all the parties who stood before the people with a view to fulfilling the right to choose representatives," Mr. Zeroual said.

He stated further that Thursday's polls were "an additional step on the road to completing the electoral process by holding local elections and electing a

council of the nation before the end of the year."

The council will be a second chamber of parliament as decreed under the new constitution of November 28, 1996.

Two thirds of its members are elected by indirect suffrage and a third is named by the head of state.

Mr. Zeroual praised the Algerians for turning out to vote despite "the idle threats and savage acts of cowardly terrorism."

The results of the elections which give a sizeable victory to the president's National Democratic Rally (RND) have been contested by opposition parties.

Israeli, Qatari officials to meet on Doha summit

TEL AVIV (R) — The president of Israel's Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Dan Gillerman, will meet Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani in New York on Monday to try to ensure Israel's participation in an economic summit in Doha later this year.

In a statement on Sunday the federation said the meet-

ing was important as Qatar and other Arab states had cast doubt on Israel's participation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit next November because of the stalled regional peace process.

"Economic and business (relations) must not be hostage to the (peace)

process and influenced by its highs and lows," Mr. Gillerman said. "We have to ensure economic continuation and stability and create as many success stories as possible just to advance the political process."

Mr. Gillerman said the meeting was also aimed at advancing Israel-Qatar bilateral relations.

Qatar's foreign minister recently said Israel's attendance at the summit was contingent on progress in the peace process.

Doha, which has trade links with Israel, is hosting the conference, the fourth since landmark peace negotiations began in 1991. Israel attended the previous three summits.

Amnesty International: Human rights situation in Tunisia a source of concern

AMMAN (J.T.) — In a report released Sunday, Amnesty International said that the human rights situation in Tunisia remains a source of concern, despite the recent release of some prisoners of conscience. "The circle of repression continues to widen; victims of arbitrary detention, torture or ill-treatment and imprisonment after unfair trials are not only political opponents: Human rights defenders and activists, trade unionists, and wives and relatives of political prisoners and refugees are increasingly targeted," the report said.

It declared that public liberties, already much

restricted in the last few years, have been further curtailed. Human rights defenders and activists find it increasingly difficult to carry out their activities. In the past few years human rights defenders have been arrested, imprisoned, tortured, intimidated and harassed for their work on behalf of the most vulnerable victims.

"If pressure and harassment are not enough to intimidate human rights defenders, the Tunisian authorities use other methods, such as imprisonment and torture. Often they also confiscate their passports, disconnect their telephone, and intercept their mail so

as to cut them off from the outside world," Amnesty International said.

The 19-page report showed that an increasing number of people, including many women and even children, are subjected to retaliation because of their family links with political opponents. Wives of Islamist political prisoners and refugees are the first victims of this repression. Their freedom of conscience and of movement are restricted, their physical and mental integrity and their right to privacy are often violated.

Often prevented from working, from leaving the country or from moving

freely within the country, these women are kept under strict surveillance. They are routinely arrested and interrogated about the activities of their exiled husbands, about their contacts with them, and about their sources of subsistence. They are often subjected to torture, including sexual abuse: some have been forced to divorce and others have been imprisoned for long periods, and their children have been traumatised by police raids conducted both during the day and at night.

The report also included examples of specific cases.



UNION LEADER RELEASED: Elias Abn Rizk, former leader of the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers, is freed on Saturday as he rests in hospital in Beirut. Abn Rizk was arrested and accused of publishing "false information" for a statement he sent to the International Labour Organisation in Geneva complaining of vote buying in union elections in April. He is also accused of "usurping an identity" and "usurping authority" (Photo by AFP)

Filipino seeking clemency from Indian victim's family

ABU DHABI (AP) — The Federal Supreme Court has postponed the trial of a Filipino facing the death penalty to give the victim's family time to consider clemency, the Gulf News reported Sunday.

The Filipino, John Aquino, is charged with the 1989 stabbing death of Harbajan Singh, his Indian roommate. He says he killed Mr. Singh in self-defence.

The Federal Supreme Court began hearing Mr. Aquino's case last November after he was sentenced

to death by a lower court and an appeal was rejected by another court. On Saturday, it postponed the case to Sept. 27, the English-language daily said.

The death sentence must be upheld by the federal supreme court and endorsed by the president of the Emirates, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, before it is carried out.

Under Islamic law, enforced in the Emirates, the victim's family has the right to demand the death penalty in a murder conviction or grant clemency and accept financial compensation known as "blood money."

The Filipino community in the Emirates has raised \$50,000 for the "blood money," the paper said. The law sets a minimum of 150,000 dirhams for such payments.

Mr. Aquino has written Mr. Singh's family asking forgiveness and has said he is willing to spend his life in prison to atone for his crime, the English-language daily said.

The Philippines' ambas-

sador to the Emirates, Roy Seneres, also sent a letter seeking clemency to Mr. Singh's relatives residing in Britain, the paper said.

There has been no response to either appeal, it said.

Three years ago, Mr. Singh's parents, wife and two children wrote a letter to the Emirates demanding that Mr. Aquino be executed.

In the Emirates, death sentences are carried out by firing squad.

Palestinian attorney general under house arrest for corruption

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him against angry people."

Mr. Baloushi said Mr. Kidreh "received bribes and committed severe violations" and that he was being questioned.

Mr. Kidreh denied any wrongdoing and said his papers were not taken away. "Whether the allegations come from (Mr. Arafat) or Bassem Eid, they are not true," Mr. Kidreh said, speaking by phone from his home.

Mr. Eid's human rights monitoring group issued a statement Sunday accusing Mr. Kidreh of blackmailing people and noting that some Palestinians had spent two years in prison without being

charged. Mr. Kidreh submitted his resignation Wednesday and it was approved by Mr. Arafat on Wednesday night. He said he was resigning because of his age and health problems, and that Mr. Arafat "was very sorry."

Cabinet Minister Tayeb Abdul Rahim said the deputy attorney general in each Palestinian city will fulfil the attorney general's role until Mr. Arafat appoints a new attorney general.

A recent internal audit found that \$326 million — nearly half the 1997 Palestinian budget — had been lost to corruption or mismanagement. It was followed by a report by a watchdog

group claiming that Palestinian officials have systematically abused their positions for personal financial gain.

Mr. Kidreh has heart and eye problems, and has trouble walking because of past leg fractures.

Before becoming attorney general, Mr. Kidreh, who is from Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip, was secretary of the Palestinian Lawyers Association and a leader of Mr. Arafat's Fateh faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

He was jailed several times by Israel for his Fateh activities before the 1993 Israel-Palestinian peace treaty.

Israelis and Palestinians hold crucial Cairo talks

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for a resumption of peace talks.

Israel strongly denied that any such deal had been reached and insisted the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) retract its claim.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat cleared the air by declaring in Cairo: "There is no agreement with Israel on settlements."

The meeting in the Itihadiya presidential palace in northern Cairo was the fruit of Egyptian-led efforts to narrow the gaps between the two sides and follows a summit between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Mubarak on May 27.

Mr. Mubarak's political advisor Ossama Al Baz, who has shut-

tled between the two sides for the past two weeks, attended the talks.

The Israeli delegation was led by chief negotiator Danny Naveh and included Mr. Netanyahu's legal advisor Yitzhak Molcho and the prime minister's political advisor Uzi Arad.

The Palestinian team was headed by Mr. Erakat and includes Mr. Arafat's political advisor Marwan Kanafani and negotiator Hassan Asfour.

PNA has insisted Israel freeze all Jewish construction in contested areas, including the new settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim which plunged the peace process into crisis, as its main condition for resuming peace talks.

Mr. Erakat said the division between Israel and the Palestinians remained as wide as when talks broke off in March.

"The gap between the two sides is greater than many expect. We hope that Mr. Netanyahu takes a decision to freeze the settlements but until now there is no agreement with Israel," Mr. Erakat said.

"We came here in the hope of reaching an agreement with the Egyptian efforts to help Mr. Netanyahu take the decision to stop (building)," Mr. Erakat said.

Speculation about a compromise on settlements was sparked by European Union envoy Miguel Moratinos who said Israel had offered "a sort of

freeze" to get the talks going.

Egyptian officials and Israeli media reports suggested that a possible compromise could call for a settlement freeze for a fixed time-frame, pending accelerated negotiations on a permanent peace accord.

But a senior Israeli official insisted Sunday that Israeli policy ruled out any halt to settlement construction, and charged that speculation to the contrary was part of a "propaganda war" to influence the outcome of the talks.

Another official, Israeli Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy of the ultra-nationalist National Religious Party, said even a temporary halt in settlement building "would

mean the fall of this government."

Palestinian officials said their team would return to Gaza City immediately after the Cairo talks to inform Mr. Arafat of the results.

Mr. Arafat, meanwhile, visited Amman for talks with King Hussein on the latest efforts to defuse the crisis in the peace process.

Jordan and Egypt, the only two Arab countries to have peace treaties with Israel, are backing Mr. Arafat's demand that Israel freeze all settlement construction including in east Jerusalem.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 77311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:40 Spinou
16:05 Neighbours
16:30 Doc. — In The Wild
17:00 Tili
17:30 Blue Heelers
18:10 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headline
19:35 Comedy — Parent-hood
20:00 Discover Magazine
20:30 Murder She Wrote
21:10 Highlander
22:00 News in English
22:35 The Wright Verdict
23:15 Homicide

PRAYER TIMES

03:50 Fajr
05:25 (Sunrise) Duha
12:35 Dhuhur
16:15 'Asr
19:45 Maghreb
21:19 'Isha

CHURCHES

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World Bank to loan Jordan \$100m

AMMAN (J.T.) — The World Bank has offered Jordan \$100 million in loans for its energy and social security sectors.

According to Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs Jawad Anani, the funds will be divided as follows: \$40 million to help the restructuring Jordan's energy sector and \$60 million to support the planned social security net programme designed to deal

with unemployment and poverty.

Dr. Anani announced the World Bank's decision after he returned to Amman Saturday evening from Washington, D.C. where he headed an official delegation to various talks with U.S. and World Bank officials on financial aid to Jordan.

He said the World Bank also agreed to finance studies on the restructuring of the cooperatives

sector and the Aqaba Region which will be converted into a free zone. The World Bank officials said they would, in addition, provide related expertise for such programmes.

Dr. Anani was accompanied on the U.S. visit by Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf.

Rhythms that weave patterns

By Tanya Habbjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Primitive drum beats mixed with swirling images of art was the essence of a performance held in the ancient courtyard of Darat Al Funun.

New York performance artists Samia Halaby, Kevin Nathaniel, and Hasan Bakr showcased their "kinetic art" to a full house last Thursday, as audience members clapped and sang along to the music.

"We are blending rhythms and colours together," Halaby said. "It's like magic — as if 100 Persian carpets are being woven before your eyes in infinite patterns."

During the performance, Halaby projected her computer graphics onto a screen as musicians Nathaniel and Bakr accompanied her. Projecting her pre-programmed art images, Halaby is able to "dance her fingers along the key board as images instantaneously appear," she said.

According to Halaby, the images are created from the "C" language that appears as



Samia Halaby

mathematical notations. "Its similar to Arabic, which is geometric and rhythmic," she explained.

Born in Jerusalem in 1936, Halaby received her masters in finance from the University of Indiana before she went on to teach at Yale University School of Art.

"I met Kevin while teaching at Yale, he was an amazing and brilliant art student," she said.

Leaving Yale in 1982 because of a conservative "step backwards" in the art programme, Halaby moved to New York and became involved in a variety of projects.



Kevin Nathaniel

Never losing contact with each other, Halaby and Nathaniel eventually began joint experiments.

Part of the "African based but super modern" Spirit Ensemble performance group in New York, both Nathaniel and Bakr are involved in many music projects, such as teaching African Mbira (finger piano) workshops.

Fusing their musical talents with Halaby's brilliant visuals, the trio decided to tour the Middle East this year. Halaby was in Jordan two years ago when she exhibited some of her works, also at Darat Al Funun.

"Kevin and Hasan came



Hasan Bakr

on this tour anxious to meet the Arab World and learn another reality," Halaby said.

Playing the first outdoor concert in 25 years in Aleppo, Syria, the trio encountered a warm audience and received an invitation from the mayor to return, she said.

Continuing the tour in Damascus and finally Amman, the group were pleased by the enthusiasm and curiosity from audiences.

"I found this to be a place where rhythm is alive," Nathaniel said. "You see rhythm in the way people walk, think, and speak."

Visiting an oud (lute) factory and purchasing tabbas [Arab drums] and camel bells, both men hope to blend these instruments into their music.

"This is a drum culture, and we have learned a different perspective on rhythm," Bakr said.

The kinetic art group thanked Darat Al Funun for allowing them to perform "in such a beautiful setting." "We hope to come back because the audience was so receptive, open-hearted, and creative," Halaby concluded.

(Photos by Madeha Al Ajroush)

IAF holds secret balloting to choose candidates for parliamentary elections

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — With a systematic procedure, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) local branches in each of Jordan's 18 electoral districts have held secret ballots to choose their nominees for next fall's parliamentary elections.

According to a party source, the Islamists will field a total of 40 to 45 candidates all over the Kingdom, and expect to win "at least 20 seats" in the 80-member Lower House.

"It is too early to say who will be the official candidates," IAF Deputy Abdullah Akaileh told the Jordan Times, stressing that "the final decision will be taken by the Executive Committee, chaired by IAF Secretary General Ishaq Farhan."

Dr. Akaileh declined to anticipate when the Execu-

tive Committee will make its final decision on the party's ticket, but some names of nominees had already been leaked to the local Arabic press.

By Saturday, the deadline for the local branches to hold their pre-elections, the ballot boxes were brought to IAF headquarters in Amman for counting.

The Arabic weekly Al Hadath announced on Sunday that IAF spokesperson Hamzeh Mansour was nominated for re-election in Amman's Second District, including the Yarmouk, Nasr Ras Al 'Ain and Badr areas.

In the 1993 elections for the Kingdom's 12th Parliament, Mr. Mansour won the second of the district's three Muslim seats with 8,880 votes, behind IAF colleague Abdul Mun'em Abu Zant, (9,336 votes).

Earlier last week, the gen-

eral assembly of the IAF Amman Third District branch had nominated Dr. Farhan, 12th legislature Deputy Ibrahim Zeid Kilani, and Circassian Walid Shukri Shabso to run in the upcoming elections.

Including the Sport City, Jabal Amman, and Abdali areas, Amman's "hot" Third District is considered to reflect the elite's political pattern and it elects one Circassian, one Christian and three Muslim deputies.

In the 1993 parliamentary elections, Dr. Kilani won the first Muslim seat, with 9,134 votes, followed by former prime Minister Taher Masri (8,789 votes) and former Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb (8,162 votes).

The third district also elected the only woman in the 12th Parliament, Toujan Feisal, who won the seat allocated for the Circassian

minority.

The Christian seat was won by Jordanian Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party Secretary General Khalil Haddadin, who has already announced that his party nominated him for re-election.

According to Arabic press reports, the IAF Madaba branch decided last week to nominate only one candidate.

The new Madaba district, previously part of the Amman constituency, was promoted to the rank of constituency with recent controversial amendments to the 1993 electoral law, deemed by opposition parties as inadequate to the country's increasing demands for democracy and more proportional representation.

Mohammad Khreibat Azaideh obtained the highest number of votes in the

IAF Madaba branch internal pre-elections, reportedly 64 out of 100 votes, while Salem Falahat obtained 23 votes and Sulaiman Abu Gaith 12, Al Dostour said.

In Mafrq, the local IAF branch general assembly chose between Majd Eitam and Mousa Shdeijat, but results have not been made available.

The Islamists did not win any seat in the Mafrq district in the 1993 elections, and party sources said the IAF will particularly concentrate on this district in the coming elections.

In the Balqa region, the IAF local branch nominated 10 candidates, including one woman — Ni'meh Hiyasat. Among the other nominees were Senator Abdul Latif Arabiyat, and Deputy Mohammad Aweidah.

Refugee camps to receive JD 355,000 in infrastructure, road improvements

AMMAN (Petra) — Director General of the Palestinian Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim Tarshihli Sunday authorised the disbursement of JD 355,000, allocated by the government to improve the infrastructure and road networks in the 13 Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.

Under the authorisation, Baqaa camp, northwest of Amman, will receive JD 42,000, Hittin camp near Russeifa, east of Amman, will receive JD 40,000, Prince Hassan and Wihdat camps will receive JD 13,000 and 14,500 respectively.

In another development, the department distributed JD 700,000 to sports clubs in these camps, in imple-



Ibrahim Tarshihli

mentation of a Cabinet decision to this effect. This amount was included in the department budget for 1997.

The Wihdat, Hussein, Al Awdeh, and Irbid sports clubs each received JD 8,500, while other clubs received amounts ranging between JD 8,000 and JD 6,000.

FILM

* "Cesar et Rosalie" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 8:30 p.m.

PLAY

* "Jadara Shines Anew" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

DIALOGUE

* Talk by Paul Rinaldi on the development of his art in relation to general

trends in modern art (including slides of his paintings, drawings, and photographs) at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Jabal Weibdeh, at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Exhibition of American products at the Amman International Fair, Marj Al

Hamam, until June 13.

* Photo exhibition entitled "Children of Planet Earth" by Takeyshi Tanuma at Haya Cultural Centre, Shmeisani, until June 12.

* Works by Abdul Basit Naqqash and Sa'd Hussein entitled "Heritage and Culture" at the gallery of the Jordan Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 21.

Government, experts warn of dangers in illegal, uncontrolled fresh water pumping

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Illegal and uncontrolled water pumping from aquifers throughout Jordan is threatening water reserves in the Kingdom, and unless the government adopts stiff measures to stop these practices, Jordan's fresh water resources will be in danger by 2005, figures and water experts said.

"After the year 2005, freshwater resources will be fully utilised and there remain no more known resources within the country to develop," a recent study by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation said.

The study showed that the overpumping from these wells was due to the surge in the population which led to "over extraction from ground water aquifers. This was exacerbated by relaxed controls on drilling operations... ground water aquifers are exploited at more than double their sustainable yield on average."

The study said that the best solution is that the mining of renewable groundwater aquifers should be checked, controlled, and reduced to sustainable extraction rates. Mining of fossil aquifers should be planned and carefully implemented, the study recommended.

Ministry of Water and Irrigation figures for 1996 showed that there were about 2,174 wells in Jordan

of which 310 wells are used for drinking purposes, 143 for industrial use, 1,648 for agricultural projects and 73 are located in remote areas.

The figures showed that in the same year the total production from these wells reached 509 million cubic meters (MCM). Illegal wells accounted for 667, with 415 considered active and 252 inactive.

Non-official statistics show that licensed and unlicensed wells pump around 515 MCM per annum, where the safe production of these wells should not exceed 277 MCM annually.

According to Elias Salameh, water expert and professor of hydrology at the University of Jordan, there are about 4,000 legal and illegal wells. The latter account for 500 to 600 wells, he said.

Dr. Salameh added that about 300 MCM are channelled to agricultural enterprises from illegal wells.

Studies indicated that the over-production from these wells leads to an increase in the salt level in the water, depriving villages and rural areas from water resources that can be used for drinking and household uses.

Dr. Salameh said no fees are levied on water pumped from unlicensed aquifers.

He added that the government has tried to affix meters for these wells but failed to do so because officials met fierce opposition

from the well-owners and because many of these metres were poorly installed.

In order to check and control the operation of the illegal wells, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali formed a committee to study the situation and close the illegal wells.

The committee is headed by Nahir Rashid, minister of interior, and includes director of the Land Department, chief of the Royal Badia Force, the governors of Zarqa and Mafrq and the head of the Water Study Department at the Water Authority of Jordan.

But these steps drew criticism and scepticism from columnists and writers in local weeklies and daily newspapers.

Member of the Lower House of Parliament Toujan Faisal commented on the government's new approach of adopting more stringent water preservation measures after Israel refused to provide Jordan with its share of water in accordance with the peace treaty.

Ms. Faisal raised several questions such as "Is the list demanding the close down of illegally dug wells selective? And are officials' wells that were dug with special permission from the Ministry of Water legal or illegal? And will the owners of these wells be asked to close down their wells, keeping in mind that their digging is considered an assault on

public property and national water resources, as well as the fact that the permissions were obtained through abuse of power?"

Mohammad Subeih wrote in Al Arab Al Youm about a "prominent official who had laid his hand on a water well that served a whole village and redirected it for use on his private farm."

"When Water Authority officials went to see what they could do, they were greeted by armed guards who pressured them to leave under the threat of hostility. The assault was not solved until Public Security Forces intervened," Mr. Subeih wrote.

Mr. Subeih said that this is the case in the majority of districts in which wells have been dug legally and illegally without fear or respect for the law or public interest.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin sounded the alarm that the salt content would reach a very high level in all the Kingdom's water wells unless illegal pumping is stopped.

Dr. Haddadin said Azraq basin can safely provide 25 to 30 MCM of water a year, but reckless digging bleeds the sources of 50 to 60 mcm which contributes to the high salt content and causes deterioration of water quality. He added that "the danger comes from pumping water from these wells more than they can bear."

"Our campaign is not targeted towards anybody, but our preoccupation is to safeguard Jordan's strategic reserve," Dr. Haddadin said.

Another area of concern is Disi basin in southern Jordan.

According to Dr. Salameh, Disi water is another example of illegal water drilling in Jordan.

He said that Disi water is one of the best, sweetest and pure waters in the world that can be used for drinking purposes.

Dr. Salameh added that the problem is that Disi basin is not a renewable resource and can be considered as the major source for the Kingdom's strategic water reserve. But many wealthy people, he said, have established farms and started pumping water from Disi basin.

"It is wrong to permit water digging in that area for agricultural purposes. Agricultural projects do not give high economic return," Dr. Salameh warned.

JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY COMPANY LTD. TENDERS INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION AND BIDDING

1. TENDER NO. 6/97: UPGRADE OF AMMAN LPG FILLING STATION PROJECT.
2. TENDER NO. 7/97: UPGRADE OF SALADIN LPG FILLING STATION PROJECT.
3. TENDER NO. 8/97 ZARQA LPG FILLING STATION NO. 3 PROJECT.

Jordan Petroleum Refinery Co. Ltd., announces a/m tenders invitation for the supply, erection and commissioning of following projects:

1. UPGRADE OF AMMAN LPG FILLING STATION PROJECT AT ABU ALANDA SITE:

The project includes three mounded LPG storage vessels of 8,250 cubic metres total water capacity and two carousels for filling 12.5 kgs LPG cylinders with a capacity of not less than 1,200 cylinders/hour each, LPG pumps, compressors, LPG semi-trailers unloading/loading facilities, trucks unloading and loading telescopic conveyors, extension of existing firefighting and cooling system, piping system, all civil works and electrical works related to the installations.

2. UPGRADE OF SALADIN LPG FILLING STATION PROJECT AT IRBID SITE:

The project includes two carousels for filling 12.5 kgs LPG cylinders with a capacity of not less than 1,200 cylinders/hour each, LPG pumps, compressors, additional LPG semi-trailers unloading facilities, trucks unloading and loading telescopic conveyors, extension of existing firefighting and cooling system, piping system, all civil works and electrical works related to the installations.

3. LPG FILLING STATION NO. 3 PROJECT AT ZARQA REFINERY SITE:

The project includes two carousels for filling 12.5 kgs LPG cylinders with a capacity of not less than 1,200 cylinders/hour each, LPG pumps, air compressors, trucks unloading and loading telescopic conveyors, extension of existing firefighting and cooling system, piping system, all civil works and electrical works related to the installations.

The above mentioned works of every project are required on basis of "lump sum fixed price turnkey job." Contractors who possess experience in the same field, and are qualified financially and technically, and who wish to participate in the above tenders for one or more of above mentioned projects, are invited to submit their prequalification documents, not later than 12:00 hrs of 13/7/1997 at the company's Head Office, noting that contractors who wish to participate in all of above projects must be at least qualified for "Upgrading of Amman LPG Filling Station Project, while contractors who wish to participate in any one or both of the other two projects must be qualified for any of them. Prequalification documents should include the following:

1. Financial capability of the contractor (financial references to be provided).
 2. Technical capability of the contractor, including details of experience and background of personnel, specifications of available equipment... etc.
 3. Detailed documents showing similar projects executed by the contractor, full names and addresses of firms for whom such services were rendered, and details of projects including contract cost and completion periods. Results of prequalification shall be announced and advised to participants as soon as they become available.
- Eligible contractors may obtain tender documents from the company's Head Office at the First Circle, Jabal Amman, against non-refundable JD(200) per set for each project, not later than 12:00 hrs of 22/7/97.
- Offers must be submitted at the company's Head Office not later than 12:00 hrs of 16/9/97.

Chairman
Board of Directors

Anti-Taleban fighters retain hold on key highway town

KABUL, (AFP) — The much-contested highway town of Jabal Os-Siraj north of Kabul was still in the hands of opposition fighters Sunday, according to reports reaching Kabul.

"The frontline is totally quiet today and Jabal Os-Siraj is still under our control," opposition spokesman Abdullah told AFP by satellite telephone.

Taleban Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai said Sunday the Islamic militia had failed to capture Jabal Os-Siraj Saturday because of difficulties crossing a swollen river.

He added he did not have an update on the frontline situation around the town, 77 kilometres north from here, but said the Taleban were looking for another way to get over the problem of the river crossing.

The aim of the Taleban push is partly to reach a large group of their forces cut-off and surrounded north of the Hindu Kush in the Baghlan provincial centre of Pul-i-Khumri.

Fighting between this isolated group and the northern anti-Taleban alliance of ethnic Uzbeks, Commander Ahmad Shah Masood and others, has been reported in and around Pul-i-Khumri for the past three to four days.

The group became stuck when an enemy-turned-ally switched allegiances again as the contingent was heading for the northern capital of Mazar-i-Sharif, leaving them surrounded by opposition forces.

The Opposition spokesman conceded the Taleban's offensive Saturday had made initial territorial gains, but claimed the Islamic militia had been pushed back in a counter-attack by forces of Commander Masood.

Even the Taleban's official Radio Shariat did not announce the fall of Jabal Os-Siraj Sunday, merely reporting the "capture of large areas towards Panjshir Valley," which is Commander Masood's home turf to the northeast.

"The frontline is the same as before, by the bridge near Charikar," said the opposition spokesman.

The Taleban launched their offensive from Parwan provincial capital Charikar, 65 kilometres north of Kabul, at dawn Saturday to capture the former 2nd Division army base not more than two kilometres short of Jabal Os-Siraj.

Mr. Abdullah said that under pressure from a two-pronged counter-attack the Taleban had to fall back from this army base leaving around 80 dead in the field while 72 others were allegedly taken prisoner.

He added the Taleban had evacuated their forces which had successfully penetrated the Ghorband Valley to the northwest of Charikar.

The blow-up bridge called Pul-i-Matak marked the approximate frontline just north of Charikar according to Mr. Abdullah, who said Commander Masood's men had it within range of their heavy machineguns.

Mr. Stanekzai said the Taleban wanted to clear Commander Masood from Jabal Os-Siraj so they could

attempt a breakthrough to a large force of their Islamic brothers surrounded in Baghlan province north of the Hindu Kush Mountains.

He added that by opening the north-south highway through the Salang Tunnel which is still controlled by Commander Masood, much needed supplies of food could be shipped to needy civilian population also trapped in the fighting.

Commander Masood has not declared any interest in marching on Kabul yet — instead Mr. Abdullah reported he wants to clear the Taleban from the northern provinces first.

The Taleban are currently facing an opposition of coalition allies made up of Commander Masood, ethnic Uzbek General Abdul Malik and the Shiite religious minority faction called Hezb-i-Wahdat based in central Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Turkmenistan's Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Boris Shikmuradov said Sunday he believed warring Afghan factions were ready for peace.

"I have a feeling that all Afghans are prepared for a peaceful settlement," the official Pakistani news agency (APP) quoted Mr. Shikmuradov as saying after a two-day visit to Pakistan.

He said all Afghan factions should come to the negotiating table because only an intra-Afghan dialogue could bring peace.

The Taleban militia, which controls about two-thirds of Afghanistan, is battling opposition forces on several fronts north of the capital, Kabul.

Mr. Shikmuradov, who held separate talks with Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan and the pro-Taleban ambassador to Islamabad, Shahabuddin Dilawar, on Saturday, said his country had no differences with Pakistan over regional policy.

"We have no contradictions with Pakistan over regional and bilateral issues," he said, but made clear Turkmenistan had no immediate plans to follow Islamabad's lead in recognising the Taleban administration as the legitimate Afghan government.

"We fully understand moves initiated by Pakistan," he said, apparently referring to Pakistan's May 25 recognition of the Taleban. "Turkmenistan is a U.N. member and will strictly follow all U.N. rules and regulations," he added.

The United Nations has yet to decide whether Afghanistan's seat at the world body should go to the Taleban, who captured Kabul from then-President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Pakistan recognised the Taleban shortly after the militia moved into the northern capital of Mazar-i-Sharif in alliance with ethnic Uzbek troops who had mutinied against northern opposition leader General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

Mr. Shikmuradov said Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and other regional nations had agreed to work together for peace in Afghanistan at last month's summit meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organisation in the Turkmen capital, Ashgabat.



Fighters of the Islamic Taleban militia crouch in the debris of a destroyed house as they aim a rocket-propelled grenade launcher at opposition forces in the town of Jabal Os-Siraj, north of Kabul (Reuters photo)

Albanian court rejects favour for small parties

TIRANA (Agencies) — The Constitutional Court in Albania has rejected part of the electoral code which would have given small parties the right to parliamentary representation whatever their score in the June 29 elections, Albanian news agency (ATA) reported.

The idea was to give small parties 30 out of 40 seats to be allocated on a proportional basis in the 155-seat parliament. The Constitutional Court ruled that the measure would "violate the equality of citizens and voters."

The choice of the voting system for the upcoming polls was a major bone of contention among the leading parties. The ex-Communist Socialist Party of Prime Minister Bashkim Fino wanted a proportional system while President Sali Berisha's Democratic Party (DP) favoured a majority system.

The parties finally compromised with 115 deputies to be elected by majority vote and 40 on a proportional basis.

The DP protested at the court ruling saying it was a "punishment for the small parties." The DP said the electoral law had been negotiated under the aegis of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in order to "encourage the creation of a truly pluralist parliament."

The eight small parties said they might reconsider their decision to take part in the election.

In another development, a curfew imposed on March 2 after weeks of civil strife, was shortened by one hour from Saturday, Interior Minister Belul Celu was quoted on television as saying.

The curfew now runs from 10:00 p.m. (2000 GMT) to 05:00 a.m. (0300 GMT). The curfew was already eased at the beginning of June and a ban on public gatherings was lifted.

The measures are part of gradual lifting of a state of emergency imposed at the height of an armed revolt triggered by the collapse at the beginning of the year of several shady savings schemes whose activities were tolerated by the authorities.

Meanwhile, The head of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission to Albania, Franz Vranitzky, arrived in Tirana Sunday to discuss preparations for elections due later this month.

Mr. Vranitzky, who made no statement upon his arrival, was to meet with President Berisha and Prime Minister Fino to discuss the run-up to early legislative elections June 29.

He also planned to meet with OSCE observers and the Italian commander of the multinational force which arrived in Albania in April.

South Korean military plays up danger of war with North Korea

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean military leaders have played up the danger of an inter-Korean war, after their request for a 12.5 per cent rise in next year's expenditure triggered an outcry from budget planners.

In a session Saturday with top commanders, Defence Minister Kim Dong-Jin ordered the country's defence posture be tightened, citing the danger of armed provocation by the North.

Alarmed by an exchange of fire last week between South and North Korean patrol boats near their maritime border, Mr. Kim accused Pyongyang of building up its readiness for war despite its crumbling economy and "worsening food shortages."

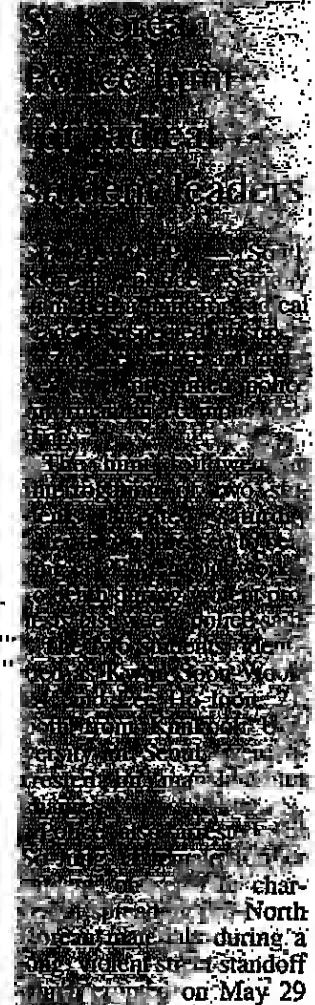
The brief skirmish in the Yellow Sea coincided with a South Korean government demand for next year's total budget to be increased to 93.62 trillion won (\$105 billion).

The proposed total 1998 budget is 31.1 per cent higher than this year's and has surprised the supervising budget office, which has campaigned for austerity and wants to keep the growth of the budget down to a single digit.

"With the prospects for tax revenues uncertain in accordance with the slowing economy, we plan to curb next year's budget growth at a single digit," a Finance and Economy Ministry official told reporters Thursday.

The budget planner called on government agencies to observe guidelines so that the single digit target could be met.

If achieved, it would be



South Korean military leaders have played up the danger of an inter-Korean war, after their request for a 12.5 per cent rise in next year's expenditure triggered an outcry from budget planners.

won, a 12.5 per cent increase on this year's figure, on the grounds that it was the minimum needed to maintain South Korea's defences against the rival North's 1.05 million-strong armed forces.

Defence is the largest single sector in the budget.

A military official meanwhile told Yonhap News Agency that expenditure was also needed to counter potential or actual buildups by other neighbouring countries.

"Along with conventional weapons to check the North's threat, South Korea needs more advanced equipment to counter a military buildup by Japan and China," the official told the agency Sunday.

He urged a double-digit increase be permitted in order to establish a defence network against North Korean missiles, calling them a serious threat to South Korea's security.

"People should understand the fact that the military should spend a huge amount of money for defence restructuring," the official was quoted as saying.

South Korea has been technically at war with North Korea since their three-year war in the early 1950s, which ended with a truce agreement and left the peninsula divided by a highly volatile demilitarised zone.

Negotiations are under way in New York between the two hostile Koreas aimed at eventually replacing the truce agreement with a lasting peace treaty, under the sponsorship of Washington which has some 37,000 U.S. troops stationed in the South.

Freak storm strikes the Netherlands; injures 40

AMSTERDAM (R) — Around 40 people were injured and one woman was missing after a freak powerful storm battered the Netherlands Saturday, capsizing boats, uprooting trees and disrupting train services.

A spokesman for the Dutch coastguard described the situation as chaotic, with many capsized vessels. Some were off the coast but the most serious problems concerned pleasure craft on the huge inland IJsselmeer Lake, just north of Amsterdam.

Coast Guard boats and helicopters were alerted to

rescue people thrown overboard in more than 100 separate incidents. Many of those in trouble were windsurfers. "There were no deaths reported, he said."

"There are many people in trouble, the storm is moving very fast. We are trying to get everybody out of the water."

The missing woman had been in a hire boat on the IJsselmeer.

The spokesman said the storm, packing force 10 winds, first appeared in the south-west of the country in the early afternoon, reaching Amsterdam around an hour and a half later. It has

since moved swiftly on north-eastwards.

In other parts of the country, trains were severely disrupted and traffic across the main bridge to the port city of Rotterdam stopped due to an overturned car. Witnesses there reported debris and uprooted trees littering the streets.

Rotterdam was particularly badly affected. "We have a few people injured by falling trees but nothing more serious. A few also fell overboard from boats that capsized but thankfully we have recovered them all," a police spokesman told Reuters.

At Rotterdam Airport four small planes were badly damaged by the high winds. "An airport spokesman said the planes were grounded at the time and international traffic was unaffected."

At the country's main Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, planes were slightly delayed but there was no damage.

The high winds uprooted trees across the country. In the southwestern town of Bergen-Op-Zoom, about 20 people were reported to have been injured by a marquee collapsing.

Dozens die in India temple blaze, stampede

THANJAVUR, (R) — Dozens of Hindu worshippers died when a fire erupted in an 11th-century temple in southern India and set off a stampede among panic-stricken devotees, authorities said Sunday.

Police in Thanjavur, 320 kilometres southwest of the capital of Tamil Nadu State Madras, said 37 bodies had been recovered following the blaze and ensuing chaos on the eve of a major Hindu celebration in the historic temple town.

Two more victims died later in hospital, they said.

They said 90 people were injured, 44 of them seriously, in the incident which occurred at about 7 p.m. (1330 GMT) Saturday. Many of the injured were burned.

Earlier, police in Madras said at least 50 were killed and 100 injured, while the Press Trust of India (PTI) said at least 60, including 28 women and five children, died.

Local authorities said most of the victims were trampled when thousands of

worshippers rushed to escape the flames which engulfed a temporary tent made out of coconut leaves.

"Flames and smoke were pouring out of the temple," resident G. Srinivasan told Reuters. "People were running every which way, falling on one another in total darkness."

Witnesses said there was only one exit and many devotees, including women and children, were prevented from leaving by barricades set up to control the crowd.

"I was standing inside the complex when a child and woman were caught in the stampede," said Kaliyamurthy, a guard who was on duty at the time. "I tried to pull them out but the child died. Fortunately I managed to save the woman."

"When I saw the child dying in my hands, I fainted."

Many were trampled to death after tripping on bamboo sticks or urns, while others were suffocated in the rush to the exit.

Authorities said the blaze started when a fire cracker that was lit outside the sprawling temple complex ignited the coconut leaves spread as a tent.

"I was praying when suddenly I saw fire at the corner of the tent," Pichai, 55, said. "People fell on me and asked for help. I caught hold of the pole and yelled for help. Police then pulled me out."

Brihadewswara, known as "big temple," was built in the 11th century by the Hindu King Rajaraja Chola. It has been classified as a world architectural monument by the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, United Nations of India said.

The temple housed the highest Lingam, or symbol of a Hindu God's regenerative power, in India and the temple tower was 66 metres high, the tallest in Asia, news agencies said. It contains many rare paintings and stone inscriptions.

Witnesses said there was little damage to the temple

as the fire and stampede occurred between the outer wall and the inner sanctum.

PTI said rituals were under way in the temple ahead of the culmination of the Hindu ceremony Kumbhabhishekam Sunday. The ceremony, which was being held for the first time in 17 years, was postponed until Monday, police said.

All India Radio noted that the accident was the latest in a series of fires at religious events, citing a blaze during a pilgrimage at Mecca in April in which 343 Muslim pilgrims died and a fire at a Hindu religious gathering in Eastern India in February where 204 people died.

"Fire tragedies, especially at religious congregations, have been increasing in India in recent times," the radio said.

"These fire accidents make us reflect on the lack of precautionary measures taken by the organisers, administrators and authorities concerned."

One dead, three wounded in Danish Biker clash

COPENHAGEN, (R) — A member of the Bandidos motorcycle gang was shot dead in Denmark Saturday in what police said was the latest clash in a Nordic biker war with the rival Hell's Angels that had already taken nine lives.

Police in the seaside town of Liseleje, 30 kilometres northwest of Copenhagen, said four members of the Bandidos gang were hit by a burst fired from an automatic weapon from a passing car as they left a hamburger

bar. One of them was killed and the other three were wounded.

Witnesses said two or three men were in the car, which drove off after the shooting. Police set up roadblocks in the area in an effort to catch the attackers.

Last Wednesday a car bomb exploded at a Bandidos clubhouse in the Norwegian town of Drammen, killing a woman passer-by and prompting Prime Minister Thorbjørn Jagland to promise to crack down on

the Nordic offshoots of U.S. motorcycle clans.

A Nordic vendetta between the two gangs has festered since 1993 when the Bandidos first began to challenge the Hell's Angels for dominance in the region.

A member of the Hell's Angels-affiliated Rednecks died in a gunfight with Bandidos in Sweden in 1994 and two Bandidos were killed in Sweden and Finland in the following two years.

Full-scale war erupted in

March 1996 when gunmen outside Copenhagen Airport shot dead Danish Bandido leader Uffe Larsen and wounded three of his companions.

A Danish Bandidos member was fatally shot in the head near the Norwegian town of Drammen in July that year and in October, in an apparent act of revenge, a shoulder-fired missile ploughed into Hell's Angels headquarters in Copenhagen, killing a member and a women party guest.

Former Karachi police chief held in Bhutto murder case

KARACHI (AFP) — Pakistani police detained Karachi's former police chief Sunday in connection with the murder of Mir Murtaza Bhutto, the estranged brother of former premier Benazir Bhutto, officials said.

Shoaib Suddle, who headed the city's police at the time of the killing last September, was detained under a law which allows the government to arrest a person considered a threat to public order for 30 days.

A provincial official said it was feared he might try to leave Pakistan if he were allowed to remain at liberty.

"We have detained him on the basis that he may leave the country," the senior official of the Sind government told AFP. A hostel known as police club where Suddle has been staying, has been declared a sub-jail after his detention early Sunday.

A heavy police presence has been deployed around the building, reserved for police officials, and Mr. Suddle is to be held there.

Mr. Suddle is accused of involvement in a conspiracy

case linked to the killing of Murtaza in September last year, but has not yet been formally charged.

He had earlier obtained bail before arrest, a form of temporary protection from detention allowed in Pakistan if charges are believed to be pending.

Such bail normally ends once a case is formally lodged by police.

The former premier's husband Asif Ali Zardari, former Intelligence Bureau chief Masood Sharif, and 17 police officials are already in jail pending trial on charges related to the murder conspiracy case.

Murtaza and seven colleagues were gunned down in a night-time shootout with police in the often violent economic capital on Sept. 20.

At the time Murtaza was involved in a public dispute with his estranged sister, and had accused her government of corruption. He was also seen as her political rival.

Mr. Suddle's detention came a week after a three-

member tribunal investigating the killing submitted its report to the government of Premier Nawaz Sharif.

The government has not decided whether to publish the findings of the tribunal, which is headed by a Supreme Court judge, although it is believed to contain strong recommendations.

The panel was formed by Benazir Bhutto's government in October last year, shortly before her dismissal on Nov. 5 by President Farooq Ahmad Leghari amid charges of corruption.

Ms. Bhutto's Pakistan peoples' party was crushed in general elections in February, when Mr. Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League won a landslide victory.

A court hearing into the conspiracy case said Saturday charges would be framed against Mr. Zardari and the others accused on June 14.

The court has already declared Bhutto's former Sind chief minister, Abdullah Shah, an absconder after he failed to appear.

Two police officials were also said to be on the run.



A patrol of Revolutionary United Front rebels patrol through downtown Freetown. The rebels, who joined forces with the junior officers who initiated the recent coup continue to consolidate their hold on the Sierra Leonean capital (Reuters photo)

S. Leone coup leaders reiterate plea for compromise

FREETOWN (AP) — Sierra Leone's renegade leaders, facing threats of international condemnation and rising chaos among their troops, appealed for a compromise with Nigerian forces trying to restore the elected government.

But Nigeria stood its ground Friday, saying nothing less than the return of ousted President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah would do.

Marauding rebel troops continued looting and beating civilian residents of the capital, and warned the few remaining foreigners to get out. The terror has kept citizens indoors and shut down the country, but coup leaders warned Friday of mass firings if workers did not show up for their jobs by Monday.

The renegades, led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma, had offered a partial compromise Thursday. They said Mr. Kabbah could return — but not as president — if Nigeria agreed to release Foday Sankoh, a rebel leader whom Maj. Koroma has invited to help run the country. Mr. Sankoh is under arrest in Nigeria on gun-running charges.

On Friday, a member of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, the group of soldiers that launched the coup, assembled foreign journalists to repeat the plea.

"We have been hearing negative information that we do not want to negotiate," Colonel Abdul Sesay said. "We are confident that if there are negotiations, we can come to a solution. We can resolve the issue amicably."

The coup leaders also said they wanted to "renew" Sierra Leone's commitment to the United Nations, Organisation of African Unity, and the Economic Community of West African States — all of which have condemned the May 25 coup and indicated their support for military power to reverse it.

"It is our resolve to sort things out militarily if it is necessary," the Nigerian commander of the West African Peacekeeping Force, Major-General Victor Malu, was quoted as saying in Friday's Lagos Guardian newspaper. "I think (Maj. Koroma) is very much scared of what the Nigerian

troops particularly can do."

Gen. Malu repeated his assertion that the Nigerian naval bombardment of renegade bases in Freetown Monday was just a taste of things to come. Action "to actually get the rebels out of Freetown has not begun," he said.

Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea have all sent troops to Sierra Leone.

Maj. Koroma has said looters will be shot on sight, yet looting continued unabated. He warned soldiers to stay in their barracks, but they continued to roam the streets in plain clothes, sometimes sending old scores with summary killings.

One U.S. citizen, who asked not to be identified, said Friday that two gunmen visited him, told him all his property was confiscated and that he should leave the country.

"They looted my house and place of business, and they took everything," said a Freetown-born Lebanese building contractor, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "They put a gun to my head and told me they do not want any more for-

eigners here in this country."

Among the renegades' targets are the country's lucrative mining interests. Foreign workers in the central, diamond-rich Koidu region held out until the middle of this week, then fled in chartered helicopters.

The renegades also have targeted journalists.

Philip Neville, the editor of the Weekly Standard Times, was hospitalized Thursday after being beaten in his home by armed men.

Sylvester Rogers, a BBC stringer, went into hiding Friday after receiving death threats.

Mutinous soldiers launched the coup with a May 25 prison break, releasing Maj. Koroma and 700 hardened criminals. Maj. Koroma said he staged the coup to preserve a peace accord with rebels who waged a six-year civil war that ended in November.

He accused Mr. Kabbah of dividing the country along tribal lines and causing the November peace accord to collapse.

U.S. envoy: New killings in former Zaire must stop

KISANGANI (R) — U.S. envoy Bill Richardson called for an end to killings of civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, after President Laurent Kabila said he would help a U.N. probe into reported massacres of refugees.

Mr. Richardson, Washington's ambassador to the United Nations, told reporters at a transit camp for Rwandan and Burundian Hutu refugees, near the eastern city of Kisangani, Saturday that reports of widespread killings continue.

"All of us, the new government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, its neighbors and the international community have the responsibility to stop the killings of innocent civilians," Mr. Richardson said.

Mr. Kabila's takeover last month as president of Africa's third largest country, after a seven-month bush war, has been coloured by reports that his soldiers have been systematically killing

ethnic Hutu refugees in areas they control.

His alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL) denies massacres took place and President Kabila Saturday gave Mr. Richardson his pledge that an enquiry by U.N. human rights investigators would be given every assistance.

An earlier mission to investigate reported massacres was stopped from working by Mr. Kabila's soldiers — many of whom are ethnic Tutsis whose origins lie in Rwanda.

"We are delighted that President Kabila has made this declaration and we are looking forward to its implementation on the ground, which of course is essential," said Pierce Gerety, U.N. humanitarian coordinator.

Mr. Richardson said Mr. Kabila had agreed that an advance team would arrive in Congo on June 20 so that the investigation could begin on July 7. He also said Mr.

Kabila had agreed to prosecutions for violations of international law.

The refugees are the rump of over a million who fled Rwanda fearing reprisals in 1994 after Hutu hardliners slaughtered hundreds of thousands of minority Tutsis.

The U.N. refugee agency says some 815,000 have returned home since last November, while 46,000 have been found and about 247,000 remain unaccounted for.

Tutsis from Rwanda are some of Mr. Kabila's main allies. The refugees include many civilians but also fighters of Rwanda's former Hutu army who were blamed for the genocide.

As Mr. Richardson left the Kilometre 11 Camp that is temporary home to around 2,000 people, another 14 were brought from the bush in a truck.

Most were barely able to walk, on legs that were little more than bones with a loose

veil of skin.

Many appeared to have difficulty gripping the blankets and plastic bags of biscuits they were given by aid workers to try and ensure their survival after months in thick forests.

"Every day some come in like this," U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees protection officer, Katrina Lumpkin said. "Our teams go up to 30 kilometres into the forests to find them."

The number of refugees arriving now is a slow trickle compared to April and May when over 40,000 refugees were repatriated to Rwanda. At least 80,000 refugees were reportedly living near Kisangani before the ADFL arrived in March.

Mr. Richardson is heading a team of over a dozen experts from different branches of the U.S. administration, who will brief Mr. Kabila's government on international expectations after the overthrow of the president of the former Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko.

Ferocious battles rage as Sri Lankan troops take Tiger land

COLOMBO (AFP) — Ferocious fighting raged in northern Sri Lanka as thousands of elite army commandos kept up a major offensive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas, leaving 116 dead on both sides, officials said Sunday.

Troops backed by tanks and helicopter gunships pushed deeper into territory held by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as part of a fresh onslaught resumed Friday, the Defence Ministry said.

A Ministry spokesman said that 21 bodies of Tiger rebels were recovered following Saturday's fighting, raising Tiger casualties to 91 since fighting erupted Friday.

"Troops moving with the support of armour and artillery came under enemy resistance," he said. "Technical sources confirmed that air and artillery attacks made direct hits on the terrorists causing heavy casualties."

Since Friday, 25 security personnel have been killed and more than 60 wounded in fierce close-range fighting, the spokesman said, adding that troops continued to consolidate Sunday in newly-taken areas.

There was no immediate word from the LTTE about the latest fighting which erupted Friday ending a 13-day lull. However, the group's clandestine radio said they lost 15 cadres, including two women Friday.

The Voice of Tigers radio said there was heavy fighting at Vilakkuvaiyakulam in the district of Vavuniya in Friday.

"Two women cadres were among the 15 who were killed," the radio said. It did not give details of fighting nor the casualties among government forces, numbering two divisions, or 20,000 men.

Defence sources said government forces were a short distance away from the rebel stronghold of Puliyanakulam, located along a vital

highway to the northern peninsula of Jaffna, after fighting Friday.

Troops have another 60 kilometres to go before they will be able to open the road to Jaffna through rebel-infested jungle areas and Defence sources said the campaign could take weeks, if not months.

As troops mounted pressure on the rebels from two flanks, the guerrillas in a statement from their London office said diseases were spreading uncontrollably in the region of Wanni which is under their control. "Cholera, typhoid, diarrhoea, dysentery, scabies, malaria, cerebral malaria and common fever are rampant," the LTTE said in the statement sent here from its London office.

It accused the government of imposing an embargo on medicines going in to rebel held areas, a charge denied by the authorities.

In the first phase of the offensive begun on May 13, some 120 soldiers were

killed while the military estimated Tiger casualties at over 300 killed. The Tigers say they lost only 82 and claim they have killed more soldiers.

The Tiger guerrillas are leading a drawn-out campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions. More than 50,000 people have been killed in the separatist conflict in the past 25 years.

Meanwhile, a newspaper reported Sunday that the Tiger rebels have thrown disabled fighters into "suicide attacks" against government troops in the guerrillas' northern stronghold.

"A government official who arrived in the army-controlled area confirmed that the LTTE was providing training to its cadres who have been crippled in previous operations to carry out suicide attacks," the Independent Sunday Times said.

The LTTE's suicide bombers are known as the "Black Tigers."

Congo Brazzaville call for truce goes unheeded

BRAZZAVILLE (R) — A call for a ceasefire in the Congolese capital Brazzaville went unheeded Sunday as the army and a political militia clashed for a fourth day.

A French soldier was shot dead and five others wounded in a firefight with unruly troops Saturday as they evacuated foreign residents who had been trapped in a building by gunfire.

Shooting in the business district went on into the early hours of the morning and resumed at 5 a.m. (0400 GMT) after a lull of about two hours.

"We have been attacked and we are exercising our right to self-defence," former President Denis Sassou Nguesso told Radio France International.

The battles pitting his followers against troops loyal to President Pascal Lissouba began Thursday after troops surrounded Mr. Nguesso's home to enforce a ban on private militias in the runup to July 27 presidential elections.

President Lissouba's prime minister, Charles David Ganao, told state radio Saturday night the polls would go ahead as planned and called for a halt to fighting and looting in the city.

There was no reliable death toll for the Brazzaville clashes although police sources spoke of several dozen dead and many more wounded.

Mr. Ganao said President Lissouba — whose whereabouts were unclear — had accepted a mediation offer from Gabon's President Omar Bongo, and a proposal for all-party talks from Bernard Kolelas, the mayor of Brazzaville and Mr. Lissouba's main political opponent.

Supporters of Mayor Kolelas have not been drawn into the fighting as in 1993 when 2,000 people were killed in the capital. His Bacongo stronghold is

calm.

A group of 44 U.S. citizens who flew over the Congo River from Brazzaville to Kinshasa, the capital of Laurent Kabila's Congo, said their plane was fired upon.

"Shots were fired at the airplane and we saw red tracer bullets going past," Stan Holman, of the Christian Alliance Mission, told Reuters in Kinshasa.

Mr. Sassou Nguesso, a former Marxist military leader named president in 1979, was voted out in 1992 after the advent of democratic reform. He has accused Mr. Lissouba, who won the 1992 presidential election, of fomenting violence to postpone next month's election.

President Lissouba, Mr. Sassou Nguesso and 1992 runner-up Mayor Kolelas are likely to be the front-runners among about a dozen candidates.

The French Defence Ministry in Paris said the soldier was killed when "uncontrolled elements" of the Congolese army fired on them as they evacuated foreign residents, including French nationals, who had been pinned down in a building by firing.

The Ministry said the operation had the approval of Congolese authorities and a senior Congolese army officer who was with the French troops was wounded.

Fighting in the north between supporters of Mr. Sassou Nguesso and former President and Prime Minister Jacques Joachim Yhombi Opango, Mr. Lissouba's campaign manager, has killed 16 people in under a month.

Government officials said troops had gone to Mr. Sassou Nguesso's home Thursday to arrest members of his entourage on murder charges in connection with the incidents in the north.

Kinkel advises Poles to sit back, relax over NATO

WARSAW (R) — German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, visiting his Warsaw counterpart Saturday, advised Poles to relax and trust the Western partners they hope soon to join in NATO.

So easy-going was the informal visit by Mr. Kinkel to Poland's Dariusz Rosati that they rang up new French Socialist Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine from a public payphone on the street in the east Poland resort town of Kazimierz.

Poland shook off Moscow's domination with the fall of communism in 1989 and is anxious to join the Western alliance quickly. Warsaw's diplomats are constantly on guard for any possible threats to this process.

Mr. Kinkel, whose country is among Poland's strongest advocates with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the European Union, said Poles should have more faith. Polish News Agency (PAP) reported.

"If I was a Pole I would sit back in a chair and wait," the agency quoted Mr. Kinkel as telling reporters as he and Poland's Rosati, neckties off, took a Wisla Riverboat cruise.

Mr. Kinkel dismissed fears in the country of nearly 40 million people that last month's deal between NATO and Russia, paving the way for the organisation's eastward enlargement, might mean the two sides talking about Poland without giving it a say.

"Poland is too important and too big for anyone to do anything over the heads of Poles," Mr. Kinkel was quoted as saying.

Nevertheless Poland's Rosati said his country was working on ideas for ways to ensure that nothing was decided concerning Poland's security, without its participation, at meetings of the new NATO-Russia Council.

Poland is confident of being in the first group of prospective new members which will be asked to start NATO entry talks at the defence pact's summit in Madrid in July.

Polish public television news said the two ministers rang France's Vedrine from the payphone, with congratulations on his appointment, after a mobile phone failed to work.

The public gesture, in front of reporters, was also designed to underline the Weimar Triangle, a loose framework for friendly cooperation between the three countries.

The French Foreign Ministry in Paris announced that Mr. Vedrine had conferred by telephone with his two fellow ministers on forthcoming diplomatic events.

A Ministry spokesman said Mr. Kinkel and Mr. Vedrine discussed an EU summit in Amsterdam on June 16-17 and a Franco-German summit set for Friday in the French city of Poitiers.

The Amsterdam EU summit is expected to reach agreement on a new pact on EU institutional reforms, intended to update the Maastricht Treaty, and will clear the way for talks on entry of new members such as Poland to the union.

Pope tells huge crowd of Poles to nurture freedom

KRAKOW (R) — Pope John Paul told a crowd of more than a million Poles Sunday that now that they had regained freedom after nearly half a century of communism they should use it to spread love and truth.

The Pope attracted the biggest crowd of his trip so far when a sea of people turned out to see him at the Blonia Park in Krakow, the city where he lived for more than 20 years as priest, bishop and cardinal.

The "homecoming" attracted more than 1.5 million people, according to Polish Government Protection Office (UOP) security officials at the scene.

Thousands of banners were up in the 48-hectare field as the Pope was driven through the crowd in a glass-topped Popemobile.

The 77-year-old Roman Catholic leader spoke in a strong voice at the mass, which took place the day after Saturday's packed agenda of four events that brought him from his beloved Tatra Mountains to Krakow, the last leg of his 11-day tour.

Wearing resplendent gold robes billowing in a soft breeze, he told the crowd that 10 years ago "We had before us the problem of the discovery of freedom".

In 1987, the country was still run by Communists.

U.S. ethics panel urges ban on human cloning

WASHINGTON (R) — A U.S. ethics panel recommended Saturday that Congress enact legislation to ban the cloning of entire human beings for now but allow the cloning of human embryos for private laboratory research.

Under the scenario proposed by the National Bioethics Advisory Commission, scientists or doctors could make cloned human embryos for research purposes but would be prohibited from implanting them into women's wombs to make viable babies.

"Human cloning that leads to the birth of a child should be forbidden by law for at least three to five years," the panel said in its report, which will be sent to President Bill Clinton Monday.

Mr. Clinton asked the advisory group in February to review the complex legal and ethical ramifications of cloning after scientists in Scotland reported they had cloned a lamb — which they named Dolly — from a single cell taken from an adult sheep.

Their success was controversial, raising the prospect that the procedure could be used to make humans genetically identical to an existing man or woman.

The U.S. commission of 18 scientists, lawyers and theologians was faced with trying to reconcile the views of opponents of cloning who regard it as an affront to nature and demand a complete ban, and supporters who see it as a stunning scientific breakthrough with promising medical

repercussions.

Polls taken shortly after the announcement of the cloning of Dolly showed 90 per cent of Americans opposed human cloning.

In March, President Clinton broadened his 1994 prohibition on government-funded human embryo research to include federal funding of human cloning work, saying it raised deep concerns "given our most cherished concepts of faith and humanity."

"Each human life is unique, born of a miracle that reaches beyond laboratory science. I believe we must respect this profound gift and resist the temptation to replicate ourselves," he said.

The panel's proposal would extend that human cloning ban to include privately funded work, but leave in place the current policy allowing private embryo research.

The commission's recommendations appeared to meet the most immediate concern of many Americans — that the scientific procedure that produced Dolly might be used to make children who would be exact genetic copies of a single adult.

But critics complained the commission had not gone far enough. Senator Christopher Bond, a Missouri Republican, said it left the door wide open to future cloning.

"I had hoped that the federal ethics commission would not be afraid to make a strong moral statement that human

cloning is wrong, period, and should be banned," he said.

Sen. Bond, who introduced a bill that would impose a total ban on human cloning, said it would be up to Congress and state legislatures to resolve the issue.

The Family Research Council (FRC) accused the commission of "completely avoiding the subject of ethics."

"FRC strongly opposes this recommendation ... Such a policy is premised on the false assumption that human beings less than 14 days old are not completely human, thereby condoning the destruction of countless numbers of embryonic children for the sake of 'research'," the organisation said.

American Life League President Judie Brown said the commission had made "a terrible mistake."

"The persistent effort by members of the scientific community to redefine the human being and equate him with members of the animal kingdom can only lead to moral chaos and social ruin," she said.

A pharmaceutical industry group welcomed the recognition of the importance of genetic research, but said any ban on cloning complete human beings should be narrowly defined.

"Any legislative prohibition on the cloning of entire human beings must not jeopardise biomedical research that involves the cloning of human genes, cells or tissues," the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America said.

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Signal before restart

THE EGYPTIAN initiative to breathe new life into the deadlocked Palestinian-Israeli peace talks appears to be bearing fruit judging by the contents of the initiative's five points already disclosed. By calling for a halt to all Israeli plans to alter the status of Jerusalem, the freezing of Jewish settlements in the rest of the occupied territories and the implementation of all agreements, including the opening of the Palestinian airport and the road linking the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, the stage appears set for the relaunching of negotiations.

In the bargain, Israel seems to have succeeded in getting what it wanted in the first place: the immediate start of parallel talks on final status in a bid to determine the future of Jerusalem and the areas in which the Netanyahu government seeks to construct new housing units for Israelis.

Egypt may have succeeded in convincing Israel to put on hold its settlement building plans for the duration of the final status talks, which now appear poised to be concluded within a few months instead of years. On this basis, the Israeli prime minister presumably could now sell his people, especially the ultranationalist and right-wing elements among them, the idea that they would not have to wait for too long before they could press ahead with their settlement programme rather than halting it altogether.

What should count most, though, are the results of the final status negotiations.

If these can be judged by the published map that Netanyahu has reportedly drawn up for his state's borders, then a more serious deadlock in the renewed talks should be expected. If, on the other hand, such a map is placed on the board merely for bargaining purposes, which aim to reflect the maximalist Israeli position, it would subsequently be possible for a compromise to emerge. After all, no party can impose its vision or demands on the other without legitimacy and the bounds of international law.

As His Majesty King Hussein told the participants in the first international leadership programme of the United Nations University in Amman Saturday, any attempt to redraw the region's map is totally rejected. Jordan, the Arab World and the international community, are, as His Majesty stressed in that meeting, totally opposed to any attempt to change maps in the Middle East be it by Turkey's deep incursion in the north of Iraq or by Israel's plans for the West Bank, which includes East Jerusalem.

The crucial step for this stage, in any case, is to restart the Palestinian-Israeli talks where they had left off more than three months ago. The sooner this takes place, the better it will be for the parties themselves and for the region as a whole.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily discussed the problem of the youth during the long summer holidays and blamed the concerned authorities for failing to come up with satisfactory and effective solutions. The ministries of education and youth are the main institutions which ought to find the means to help the nearly one million school students fill their free time, called the writer Nazih. He said that the youth seldom find something to do during their leisure time, apart from reading, because the two ministries have not acquired facilities to help the young men and women carry out useful work or exercise useful hobbies during the summer holidays. It is true that these two ministries have announced programmes for the youth in the summer, but the programmes attract very few young people, added the writer. It is for this reason that most of the youth spend their time in the streets, that more incidents involving young men occur during the summer holidays and that parents complain that their children's ill-behaviour increases when schools are closed for the long holiday, said the writer. He said that the two ministries, which have meagre means to deal with the situation, should be assisted by those organisations and non-governmental institutions which, to date, have only offered Jordanian youth lip service and no practical means to address this serious social problem.

A WRITER for Al Arab Al Yawm discussed the ongoing Turkish aggression on northern Iraq and warned the Turkish military that their aggression will adversely affect Turkey's domestic, as well as external, front, especially Ankara's relations with the Arab and Islamic countries. Fuad Dabbour said that perhaps the Turks are dreaming of building an empire through the help of Israel and the United States, but such an adventure would implicate Turkey in dangerous situations with its neighbours that would sap its resources. The Turks must realise that Israel seeks only its own interests and that the Jewish state can by no means save the Turks from internal strife, explosions on the domestic front and wars with Arab and Muslim neighbours or sectarian violence that could erupt at any time as a result of irrational policies, warned the writer. At the same time, the writer said, the Arab countries should wake up to the looming danger poised to its existence and which involves Turkey as a tool that is meant to help Israel and the U.S. to achieve their hegemony on the Arab region.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Electronic business and economics

IT IS not so long ago that The Economist, the conservative British business magazine, published an article about the lack of evidence proving the effectiveness of computers to increase business efficiency to a level that would compensate for the cost of computerisation. At that time, such an act seemed to fit with the conservative image of the magazine and its European character, which usually lags behind the U.S. by 50 years in the diffusion of new technologies.

However, recently the magazine has changed its spots and has been publishing articles on the role of information technology and computers, particularly computer networks, in increasing productivity. These articles in The Economist, and in almost every other business periodical, have been fuelled by the success of the U.S. economy (success does not only have many parents, it seems, it also has many writers) which, they claim, is based on the heavy use of computer networks in business transactions.

Supply-siders' theory, which is based on lowering taxes for the rich so that wealth would trickle down to the poor, received a significant blow in the nineties. Wealth did not trickle down; however, the burden of bad and huge government debt did, as spending on education came to a trickle and welfare spending was cut across the board, causing somewhat irreparable damage to minorities and the underprivileged.

Wealth failed to trickle down in the Reagan "heavy borrow-and-spend on the military" Keynesian years. (John Maynard Keynes is the 20th century economist who preached government interference in economy through fiscal policy). As soon as his second term was over, the people discovered that the happiness that was ushered in

by "the Gipper" (a.k.a. Reagan) was paid for by their future taxes. Borrowing did not alleviate poverty or create jobs in the Bush have-war-will-travel deficit spending days. So bad was the economy, despite the macho image of the U.S., that Bush lost the elections.

Supply-side economists, who literally saw their theory and therefore their policy advice being trashed by the absence of a trickle, have been more than annoyed by the Clinton economic era, which, among other things, has brought with it a significant, prolonged economic recovery and a golden era that is reminiscent of the sixties without a Vietnam. But, the supply-siders think that their theory has been redeemed; they have been writing about the success of their theory in explaining the current economic phenomenon of unemployment and inflation falling simultaneously; thus suggesting the failure of the traditional Phillips Curve, a negatively sloped curve supposed to rise from 40 million in 1996 to 163 million by 2000. Furthermore, demand will further increase as consumer expectations become even more positive and optimistic and trigger further purchasing; only then will prices rise as the demand effect becomes so strong that demand outpaces output and results in prices rising as producers become unable to meet greater-than-capacity customer requests. Demand-based adjustment policies should become handy then.

Obviously e-business is an important reality. The supply-side theorists, who are always trying to find justification for their failed teachings, cannot claim victory over the demand-siders. The fact that the U.S. did well during the Clinton years speaks well for his policies and economic views — after all it happened on his watch.

This time the West can get it right in Congo

By Jeffrey D. Sachs and Robert I. Rotberg

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts — The United States, France, Belgium, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank helped create the disaster of Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire. Today the West has a moral duty to help rebuild the country, even if the new leader is not making the task easy.

So far, Laurent Kabila has shown little interest in sharing power with the opposition. It seems likely that he will rely more on direct military support from Uganda, Rwanda and Angola to consolidate his rule than on the allegiance of his countrymen.

Yet, all uncertainty about Mr. Kabila aside, this is the moment when well-directed Western efforts can have the greatest effect in nudging the new government towards observing basic human rights, stabilising the economy and restarting rudimentary public services.

Western goodwill should be demonstrated first; we can hope that Mr. Kabila's can follow.

How do we ensure that we

are not creating another Mobutu? All aid should be provided step by step, conditional on the gradual development of economic order, political freedom and the rule of law.

First, the United States should abandon its calls for early elections. These will have to wait.

The experience of neighbouring Uganda is instructive. Since Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986, it has recovered from the most barrowing depths of violence and economic collapse to become one of Africa's fastest-growing countries, while improving its human rights record.

Restoring basic public order — demilitarising, inoculating against infectious disease, resettling refugees, rebuilding roads and power plants — is a surer underpinning of peace and future political reconciliation than holding elections in the midst of chaos.

This gradual approach has also worked for Mozambique, which was locked in civil war until 1992 and held free elections two years later.

The West must also work with the new government to recover the Mobutu clan's

stolen loot. Mr. Mobutu pocketed much of the \$10 billion in loans he received over the years. Western governments, needing a cold war ally, looked the other way.

Now the West can seize and sell his real estate holdings in Europe and Africa, while European countries must step up efforts to freeze his bank accounts. Any money recovered should go to the government of Congo, as the country has been renamed.

The least of Congo's worries should be the servicing of Mr. Mobutu's debts. In the short term, the country should be given legal protection to avoid harassment by creditors and the seizure of its assets abroad. In the longer run, Congo needs assurances that the West will cancel most or all of its \$14 billion in debt (almost three times its GNP).

Debt relief in such cases is vital. In the early 1990s, Poland, for example, was destitute, so Western governments and banks forgave about \$15 billion in outstanding loans. Last year Poland had Europe's highest growth rate.

Congo also needs money to pay the police, buy vac-

cines, support war refugees and rebuild roads.

The government has no taxation system and inflation has rendered the currency worthless. The World Bank and especially the Europeans, historically the biggest meddlers in Zaire's affairs, should provide the bulk of the hard currency of about \$900 million in the next year.

For its part, the United States should provide some money as well as food and medicine. It can also do more to help relief agencies fight disease.

There can be no illusions of quick progress in Congo. Its wealth has been pillaged for decades.

Today, the Western nations, once agents of despair in Zaire, can help start the rebuilding of one of the most troubled parts of the world.

Jeffrey Sachs, who has advised Poland and other countries on economic policy, directs the Harvard Institute for International Development. Robert Rotberg coordinates the institute's southern Africa programmes. This article is reprinted from The New York Times.

LETTERS

The cost of not caring

To the Editor:

I WANT to thank the Jordan Times for its policy of publicising acts of family abuse and violence (including the terrible crimes of honour) and putting its finger on social practices which cry for urgent intervention, at least in the eyes of those citizens who respect the right of every human being to physical, social and psychological well-being without discrimination of gender, age, nationality or religion.

As a clinical psychologist, I have been dealing professionally with victims of abuse and violence for many years both in and outside Jordan. I have accompanied them frequently in their desperate attempts to come to terms with experiences that have destroyed their trust in themselves and others and made their lives a nightmare. Experience taught them never to relax but to watch out constantly for danger; therefore, they all suffered from tension, anxiety, sleep and concentration problems and failure in their academic lives.

I have seen the agony of women and children who had no choice but return day after day home to their torturers. Some of them turned helplessness and anger, resulting from the abuse, against themselves or against others, thus confirming the saying that "violence breeds violence."

In my opinion, allowing domestic violence, emotional, physical and sexual abuse to continue unabated endangers the progress of the Jordanian society in at least three ways.

1. Many of the numerous victims will never be able to contribute effectively as they have lost (or as children could never learn to) trust and hope.

2. Giving respect to and leaving authority with those who perpetrate abuse and violence in "fits of fury" casts doubts on the value of some inherited leadership concepts. In this respect, I believe that a society can only thrive with leaders and authority figures who put the well-being of others first and are models in self-restraint and control.

3. Last, but not least, it is only through the care for the human needs and rights of all, without any discrimination, that a society can gain and maintain sta-

bility, balance, prosperity and draw upon the potentials of all its citizens for sustained and constructive development.

Dr. Josi Salem-Pickartz,
Amman

'Bias' on air

To the Editor:

ON JUNE 6, Cable News Network (CNN) had as a special guest, an Israeli, the newly-elected Labour leader Ehud Barak. The name of the show was Q&A, and the viewers were invited to call and interact live with the guest.

I managed to get through on 001-404-525-6888. The first question the person at the other end asked me was what was my question. I told him "my name is Basim, and I am calling from Jordan, and I would like to know if Mr. Barak would see it fit to pay war reparations to the Palestinians as the Germans have paid to the Jews in order to achieve peace."

I was told to turn down the volume on my TV so I could ask the question live and was put on hold again. Then another woman came on and asked me the same question. I responded the same way. She told me that the question would be passed along and hung up on me.

Based on the questions that were put through, that obviously presented the same terrorist stereotype of Arabs, it is clear to me that the CNN is a biased agency that only authorises questions in an subjective manner.

I would like to ask the CNN why they invite individuals to call if they plan on censoring questions. And is it worth watching a seemingly partial TV station?

Basim Najjar,
Amman.

Human Rights File

Man's well-being is above all other considerations

By Waleed M. Sadi

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan's stand on the place all citizens should occupy in our society, especially within the macro-economic planning, is clear as he constantly reminds that development, in all its dimensions and sectors, must have a human face.

Few days ago, when the Crown Prince visited the southern regions of the country, he strongly asked for the well-being of all Jordanians to be made a top priority in any development scheme.

That was not the first time Prince Hassan reiterated this article of faith in humanitarian considerations within the framework of development, especially in the economic sphere. During his recent trip to several European capitals, the Crown Prince repeated his call for the inclusion of humanitarian considerations in all efforts to articulate development plans.

Prince Hassan has reminded policy makers, time and again, that it is imperative not to pursue development at the expense of the welfare and well-being of each and every citizen, especially the most deprived. It has been said, in this context, that Prince Hassan had expressed reservations about lifting food subsidies by the former government of Abdul Karim Kabarti even though it appeared that lifting them was sound from a strictly economic point of view. What is disturbing is the suggestion that few of our policy makers are able or willing to pick up the signals coming their way from the Crown Prince regarding the urgent need to put human considerations above all other objectives.

Prince Hassan's total and unwavering commitment to the well-being of the average Jordanian, especially those citizens living below the poverty line, goes back a long way, at the time when he co-chaired the Independent Commission on Humanitarian Issues (ICHI) in the early eighties. For those who are keen to get acquainted with the Prince's concepts on the subject, all that they need to do is read carefully, thoughtfully and seriously the proposals and recommendations of ICHI, which are also the words and reflections of Prince Hassan.

I choose to reproduce some excerpts from the report that show the Crown Prince's concern for the lot of the poor: "It cannot be met in our view (winning the human race) without placing human welfare at the centre of national and international policy-making," said the report right at the outset. It went on saying that there is an urgent need "to bring humanitarian concerns to the same level of experience and expertise as usually accorded to economic and security matters." Then there is the statement that "there is a growing awareness that economic growth is only worthwhile if it

is accompanied by adequate social development."

In the chapter on "The Ethics of Human Solidarity," the report further says that "humanitarianism is a basic orientation towards the interests and welfare of people. It demands that whatever detracts from human well-being must be questioned, regardless of its effects on economic growth, political power, or the stability of a certain order."

In other words, this could mean that at least some of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) directives are not in keeping with humanitarianism.

The report had successfully put these noble concerns for man even more succinctly when it stated that the conceptual framework of ICHI is to change man's perspective from "a fractured to a holistic view of human welfare which is centred on the commonality of human interests."

It would be, therefore, pertinent to ask whether the free market economy would heed such a broad and enlightened perspective. Perhaps the World Bank and the IMF should reflect on the submissions of ICHI before they advocate the pursuit of a certain free market economy plan for the underdeveloped countries of the world. Better still, our own policy makers should perhaps reflect more faithfully on the thoughts of the Crown Prince before they opt for one economic course or another.

In the late seventies, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommended that countries' economic plans be drawn up for the primary purpose of alleviating poverty and unemployment. The ILO's early guidelines are all but forgotten by most states, including those which suffer most from these two afflictions.

It is no longer far fetched to believe, therefore, that policy makers who pretend that they do not fully comprehend or appreciate the impact of Prince Hassan's repeated speeches regarding the pivotal role of the human being in development do so out of utter disdain or lack of respect for the rights of man.

It should be clear to some planners who overlook periodic signals and warnings that unless man is given the priority he deserves, winning the human race in the upcoming century will be lost even before it starts.

Mutawi lists press excerpts...

(Continued from page 1)

naturally it was neither emotional nor hard-hitting.

"I was mostly enticed by two things that I had to examine carefully: The first was statements attributed to Mr. Abdul Majid Thuneihat. The overall leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, urging people to complain to human rights organisations affiliated to the U.S. Democratic Party and then His Excellency's explanation of the issue later in a way different from what was published after His Excellency the speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'ad Hayel Srour, replied to Mr. Thuneihat... The other thing was the report published by Human Rights Watch which judged the amendments from far away, and issued a judgement that lacks justice on freedom in our country.

"Within this context, I hope my explanations in this reply will deal with all issues that arose during the past three weeks, stressing our respect for all those views and affirming our stand in defending the right of all those who express their views. We also uphold our right to reply and explain all that was raised. Our explanations will also deal with what was raised in good intentions or with the objective of creating confusion.

"Regarding His Excellency Mr. Abdul Majid Thuneihat, whether in his first statements which some understood as urging people to write to the Democratic Party institutions which defend human rights to exert pressure (on the Jordanian government) to cancel the amendments to the law, or in his explanation

which was published Saturday on urging these institutions to pressure the (American) government so that it will not restrain our democracy... Our democracy is something that concerns our people, its representatives, press, government, and the institutions of our Jordanian state. No one can interfere in it in a way or another. Our decisions are part of our sovereignty and any view that expresses otherwise but sheds doubts on our sovereignty and independence of our decisions. Those who caused any restraints on our democracy are not Western or foreign parties, but are a group of us who persisted in their attempts to transform our democracy from (an atmosphere of) open freedoms to chaos that harms all. These were warned time and time again but with no avail. This prompted the government to use its constitutional right in protecting the march and putting a limit to the chaos without undermining freedom whose limits end only when infringing on the freedom of others.

"The evidence for this... is what was published several times in Al Sabeel newspaper, which is the real (and semi-official) mouthpiece of the Islamic movement on the absolute political freedom it enjoys in its political views and criticism, and its attack on the decay that prevailed in some newspapers in the name of freedom. Following is what Al Sabeel published under the name of its chief editor in its editorial of March 14, 1995 on political freedom it enjoys:

"For veracity's sake, we say in this context, Al Sabeel was never exposed

to any pressures nor harassment because of its political stand, which is something that is in favour of the consecutive governments." (Al Sabeel of March 14, 1995)

"I will mention some quotations published in newspapers without commenting on each of them since they are self-explanatory in their call for amending the law, apportioning deviation, preventing any harm to the interest of the country, stopping lies, fabrications and rumours and protecting the foundations of the society:

"As part of attacks by the Parliament on the government for not amending the Press and Publications Law in the beginning of the year, Deputy Ahmad Kassasbeh threatened to introduce a proposal to amend the Press and Publications Law if the government does not introduce an amendment." (Al Urdun newspaper, Feb. 17, 1997)

"In commenting on the deteriorating professional level of some weekly newspapers, Deputy Ishaq Farhan said: 'This phenomenon causes a lot of moral harm to the behaviour of the young generation and contributes to spreading vice and polluting the social environment in a manner as vast as the spread of these newspapers.'" (Al Sabeel, August 27, 1996)

"The Jordan Press Association received a large number of complaints from disgruntled citizens who protest at 'some yellow newspapers' publishing clippings and photos aiming to spread vice in our good Jordanian society to make more financial profits at the expense of our sublimity values." (Al Sabeel, Dec. 27, 1994)

"There is a noticeable

drop in the number of Arab tourists (who come for recreation, medical treatment or education) which dealt a hard blow to the tourist season. Gulf tourists fear for their lives, thinking that the Jordanian society is a society dominated by crime. This is caused by the crime stories they read... in Jordanian newspapers." (Al Sabeel, Jan. 24, 1995)

"There is a mad race by some newspapers to publish sensational news, be they political or social, and many of these news items are either erroneous or baseless, and about things that take place in all the world but Jordan." (Al Ahd, Oct. 15, 1994)

"We ask: Isn't there in the press and publications law any articles that uphold the Jordanian citizens' right to protect their children in this medium of mental and moral corruption?" (Al Rai, Nov. 15, 1994)

"Some weekly newspapers have carried within their pages 'explosive belts' that never hesitate to damage all values, morals and credibility. They just realised that these explosive belts will ruin them one day." (Al Dustour, Dec. 16, 1995)

"There is a newspaper, or other papers, whose circulation depends on arousing the instincts of teenagers and undermining national security by amplifying crime and depicting the Jordanian society as a society of vice and crime. This caused expatriate Jordanians to raise their voices loud to complain and express their shame." (Mohammad Al Subeithi in Al Arabi Al Yawm, June 7, 1997)

"What does it mean to open your eyes in the morning and find a sensational-

ly-written headline talking about a son murdering his father, a brother slaying his sister, or a wife killing her husband? I cannot deny that adorning the headline in such a way might improve circulation, but is there a way to compare the rise in profits and sales and the deep psychological scars left in the minds of the young generation?" (George Haddad in Al Dustour, Oct. 12, 1994)

"I do not think that freedom of expression means creating false news about individuals and institutions, fabricating incidents, imagining scandals, blackmailing people and companies and distorting the image of the society... Neither do I think that respected people like the heads of associations should defend rottenness and decay and other characteristics of the majority of weekly newspapers. Can they consider that the freedom of expression allows a weekly to say that Jordan's food, water, vegetables and even mothers' milk is polluted?" (Columnist Issa Shueithi, May 29, 1997)

"Some newspapers were behind the losses that inflicted the tourism industry in Aqaba and hit the tourism season hard when they exaggerated the effects of an earthquake that took place near Aqaba." (The London-Based Al Hayat, Dec. 7, 1995)

"I am now supportive of introducing amendments to the press and publications law that ban the licensing of privately-owned newspapers and that allow only shareholding companies to issue newspapers provided that the minimum limit for their capital be raised to more than quarter a million dinars to ensure that we have press corporations and not 'shops'." (Nidal Mansour, Chief Editor of Al Hadath, Jan. 27, 1997)

"What did we do other than that? We raised the capital," the minister said in his statement after taking excerpts from newspapers supporting his stand.

He continued: "So where are the constraints introduced by the amendments, which carried the same prohibitions in the previous law. They are all principled stands not only for our government, but also for our society, nation and religion, as well as the democratisation process and international charters in the most seasoned democracies of the world. I will deal with these prohibitions in light of religious aspects and international charters. On top of these prohibitions is undermining the security of the state and its leadership, which is protected in all international legislation, laws and charters. I will give examples for other prohibitions, including:

— denigrating any of the religions and sects whose freedoms are protected by the constitution, and violating this means contempt for people's beliefs and coercing them, which is banned by Islam...

— "Offending individuals, infringing on their personal lives and harming their reputation." Violating this paragraph involves a JD 15,000 fine. And in Islam offending a decent woman without proof merits 80 lashes...

— "Undermining national unity, instigation and planting seeds of sedition in the society." Islam says that sedition is worse than murder...

— Spreading lies and rumours: This implies cheating the masses in view of the spread of newspapers and implies misleading the nation as a whole...

— Promoting deviant behaviour and vices: which is banned by Islam...

So the amendments which

raised the value of the fine on violations are only meant to protect the values of the nation and are closer to the teachings of the tolerant Islamic Sharia in its endeavours to fight sedition, vice, lies, fabrications, offending people, crime, blackmail and discrimination.

Regarding the Human Rights Watch report, its report saying that since Jordan signed the peace treaty in 1994 sensitivities arose between the government and the press is not precise. No newspaper was taken to court because of its dealing with the peace issue. Most of the court cases were because of offending the heads of several brotherly Arab states, or causing harm to Jordan's relations with its Arab medium, and we received several complaints in this regard. In addition, considerable ratio of these cases were because of promoting deviant behaviour, publishing false news or spreading rumours that caused confusion.

Regarding the organisation's call on Jordan to adhere to the International Declaration on Human Rights and relevant international charters, the legislator was not selective of the items of the convention as the organisation chose to be. This declaration also guaranteed people's rights and provided that there be laws to protect their reputation, honour and private life, in addition to guaranteeing the freedom of expression, whose limits end when it constitutes an infringement on the rights of others...

The amendments also comply to the provisions of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights issued by the United Nations in 1966 whose 7th article stressed the need for the law to protect individuals from interference in

their privacies and from campaigns that protect their honour and reputation...

Comparing freedoms in Jordan and other countries in our region, we find the following:

— Jordan does not have any prisoners of conscience, while London Radio on March 9 mentioned that the region's countries have a total of 45,000 prisoners of conscience.

— Jordan allows the entry of all of the world's publications without any exceptions and in accordance with the law, which is unique in the region.

— No government institution in Jordan has the power to suspend the publication of any newspaper, contrary to what is the case in some of the region's countries where governments have the power to suspend any publication without any court order.

— In Israel, after the assassination of its prime minister, a committee was set up by the minister of justice to amend laws in a manner that would allow the government (not the judiciary) to shut down any newspaper and intensifying (the continued) military censorship on news sent from Israel or within Israel. That is not the case in Jordan. (Al Aswaq, Feb. 11, 1996)

— The start of the democratisation process in Jordan is convincing enough that it can achieve an atmosphere of political openness as that in Europe, and even more. But in Jordan it will not take centuries to achieve that as it did in Europe. (Los Angeles Times, Feb. 20, 1997)

— In Jordan, the Lower House of Parliament is an arena for free expression of a large segment of views, and elections in Jordan are held in a free climate. (London Radio, Nov. 9, 1996)

Sahara refugees desperate to end 20-year exile

By Tracey Ober
Reuters

RABUN, Algeria — The sand is deep, white, and fine; the kind coveted at seaside resorts. But in Algeria's Hamada desert it is just another hardship for the Western Sahara refugees.

Sand whirled around 12-year-old Farsa as she struggles to drag a plastic water jug to her tent and she squints against the glaring reflection of desert sun.

Farsa points to the western horizon and says she wants to go there, to her parents' homeland, where there is some green and ocean and enough food.

Her family, among the tens of thousands of refugees who fled the former Spanish colony as the Moroccans moved in, has lived in one of the world's most desolate and inhospitable spots for more than 20 years.

Housed in four sprawling camps based in Rahuni, in southwest Algeria, they have endured harsh conditions that have created a generation of malnourished, diseased and undereducated children.

Many of the refugees have stayed for one reason — their dream of an independent homeland.

A visit to the camps last month by United Nations special envoy James Baker, sent to unlock the peace process in the region, reawakened the refugees' dormant hopes.

"I think not one of us has ever really lost the hope that one day we can return. If we lost that we would not be able to survive," Majeena, who left Western Sahara when she was five and grew up in the camps, told Reuters.

She now studies accounting at university in Geneva and her father lives in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara, but she always comes back to the camps, the only home she's ever known.

"The most important thing for me is my liberty. Some Sahrawi live in occupied territory and have money and things we don't have, but I'd rather live here with my freedom," Majeena said.

Mr. Baker was met by near-hysteria in the Smara camp where almost the entire population of 40,000 turned out to greet him with women ululating, children cheering, older men holding banners, soldiers at attention and even a small military band.

"Mr. Baker, please, please help us, we want our independence," shouted 27-year-old Sulana in perfect English.

A security guard for the former U.N. secretary of state said he had never seen such pandemonium.

But some of the refugees, having been disappointed many times before, passed beyond the niceties of protocol.

"That man Baker has to understand us. We hope he will be fair. We have sacrificed a lot, our friends, sons, and we want to have independence," Embarka Khalil, 60 and living in a dingy tent with few personal touches, told Reuters before his visit.

Her husband was killed in the 15-year war Polisario, the Sahrawi independence movement, fought against Morocco and her son is a prisoner of war in Morocco. "This is all I have. I may never see my home again," she said as tears filled her eyes. She and many of the estimated 170,000

refugees see only two paths: the one mapped out by Mr. Baker or a return to war.

A referendum on independence promised by the United Nations in 1991 has failed to materialise and the refugees, isolated in their desert wasteland, feel the world has forgotten them.

While not eager to return to war, Polisario has kept troops trained with the desert warfare skills of their nomadic ancestors, sending boys to the front with Morocco at age 18, and maintaining a supply of arms and tanks.

They also keep tight controls on the camps, keeping any signs of permanence to a minimum — there is not even a mosque — and fuelling the desire for independence with tales of horror in the Morocco-controlled or "occupied" territory. Polisario's critics have accused the group of intimidating some refugees into staying in the squalid camps to keep pressure on the international community.

Once shunned as a Marxist revolutionaries, the Arab Sahara Democratic Republic proclaimed by Polisario is recognised by 72 countries, mostly in Africa, South America and Asia, and gets arms and ammunition from Algeria.

It has a flag, a parliament of sorts and ministries for information, foreign affairs and defence among others.

Women elected by American-style town meetings run cooperative groups within the camps to distribute food, clothes, housing, health and education.

They work in collectives without pay and depend on aid from international groups. One teenager showed a visitor a decrepit truck he was fixing up, glowing with pride as he explained how he earned money to buy paint.

The refugees have learned to survive on very little, but aid workers say 15 to 20 per cent of the children suffer severe malnutrition. Others are stunted by inadequate iron and protein intake and rampant dysentery from contaminated water. The population has a high level of eye disease because of sandstorms and glare, and thyroid problems.

"These have these diseases only because they are refugees and living in these difficult conditions. These are not native to the population," said a Spanish nurse who works at one of the camp hospitals.

A report by U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said water supplies at the camps, usually from shallow wells drawing on the same water table that the latrines empty into, were among the worst in the world.

"I've lost sympathy for the Polisario after seeing how they've let their people waste away in refugee camps," said one U.N. worker who did not want to be named.

Diplomats in the region say privately that the international community is eager to resolve the conflict, in part because of the plight of the refugees, but also because it is an irritant in a sensitive region at NATO's southern flank.

They see the solution as some sort of federal state for Western Sahara within Morocco rather than full independence. But for desert survivors like the Sahrawi refugees, there is only one route home.

"If we return to our land, it will be with dignity," Mrs. Khalil said. "We would rather live here in these hard conditions than there with oppression and colonisation."

Prince Hassan...

(Continued from page 1)

discussions and set up the council as soon as possible.

The Crown Prince's remarks were followed by a discussion during which Prince Hassan stressed the need for doing all that can be done to get the peace process back on track and achieve comprehensive peace under which all parties will feel secure and their rights fulfilled.

Prince Hassan, responding to a question, said security cannot be achieved by weapons only, underlining the need to focus on soft security, which includes social and economic security.

The Crown Prince reiterated Jordan's unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their efforts to regain their

rights, including the right to independent statehood.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani and Jordanian parliamentarians taking part in the discussions attended the dinner meeting together with around twelve European parliamentarians.

According to Deputy and former Prime Minister Taher Masri, officials from parliamentary organisations, like the IPU, coming from Canada, Denmark, Great Britain, Iceland, Germany, France, Belgium, Portugal and Spain agreed on the need to establish a structure against islamophobia. "Though the exact shape of such a structure has not yet been specified."

Mr. Masri said the parliamentarians will "consult with others" and take further steps in the direction of establishing a council against islamophobia in the next IPU meeting, scheduled to be held in Cairo in September.



His Majesty King Hussein is greeted by the people of Irhid Sunday (Photo By Youssef Al Allan)

Irhid masses take to streets...

(Continued from page 1)

business. These unions are politicised and actually they all are ideologically affiliated or have allegiance to circles abroad."

"Why should the agricultural engineers, for instance, be against openness to the world including Israel? Can they answer this question? Why a dunum of land on the other side is producing twenty times a dunum in Jordan? Those who seek to see this country progressing in agriculture should not seek to see this country recoiling and shutting itself up, not benefiting from the expertise of others which could be close at hand.

What applies to agriculture applies to engineering," he said.

How can we reconcile this attitude with our complaint that we have not benefited from the dividends of peace? How can we make gains if we are against normalisation with others? And how can we build and achieve progress in various fields?"

"Let us utilise our land and let us work together and prove that this land is dear to us. People nowadays are hosing themselves with politics and meetings but I have to be frank with you and say that there are some people who do not wish to see this country progress but rather retreat and they want to see despair replacing hope and suspicion replacing confidence and there are some who seek to destroy Jordan and overthrow its regime."

The King accused certain groups, without naming them of having been instrumental in straining Jordan's relations with Syria at one point.

He said that these groups had a hand in regrettable events that occurred in Syria (in the early 1980s) prompting Damascus to accuse Jordan that it was behind these events.

Referring to the peace process, the King said that Jordan went along with the rest of the Arab World towards achieving peace. But he recalled that in 1973 the Arabs, the Muslims and

others asked Jordan to give up the efforts for regaining the occupied West Bank which before 1967 was part of the Kingdom and turn that responsibility to the Palestinian people themselves.

"We were told that you should have no say in this question because this issue should be left for its own people, the Palestinians, and while pained at this we consented and have since been committed to this decision. And we will continue to back the Palestinians with all our means and potentials to regain their rights on their national soil."

The King stressed that Jordan will remain the home to all its people of various origins be they Palestinians or otherwise if they hold allegiance to a country of their own free will until the Palestinians regain their right to return or receive compensation and decide on their own future.

"Why then should people cast doubt about our moves? Why should they

say that this country lacks freedoms? That the coming elections are rigged or forged? Had we not believed in democracy and freedom and human rights we would not have opened the door for elections in the first place. There are some who call for observers to come and monitor the elections because they continue to cast suspicion on our moves and harbour feelings of hatred and malice."

"Jordan is for comprehensive peace and will continue to seek this objective with all (its) potentials dedicated to serving the nation."

At the outset of the occasion the King honoured 50 excellent students for their distinguished work in the various specialisation's and some of their teachers by presenting them with awards.

King Hussein also called at Dar Al Hanan Orphanage in the governorate and inspected its conditions as well as the services offered to the children.

Jordanian businessmen, JEDCO to attend Europartenariat meeting in Greece next week

By Ghaila Alni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — About 15 Jordanian businessmen, representing 12 companies will participate in the Europartenariat conference to take place in Greece this month, according to Ghaila Sharaiha, director of the International Cooperation Department at the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO). At the conference, which will bring together about 2,000 companies from 77 countries, the Jordanian businessmen will establish contacts with Greek and European companies with the aim of establishing future joint ventures, said Mr. Sharaiha who is also the European Union (EU) liaison coordinator. He told the Jordan Times Sunday that JEDCO, the national

advisor for the activities that the EU organises in European and Mediterranean countries, will also be present at the conference in order to gain experience when it holds the Medpartenariat conference in Amman on July

13-14.

The conference in Amman, to be organised by JEDCO in cooperation with the delegation of the European Commission in Jordan, is expected to bring together 150 Jordanian and 300 Euro-

pean companies with the aim of enhancing economic cooperation between countries of the Mediterranean region and the EU.

The July meeting is also geared towards setting up joint Jordanian-European ventures

as well as creating a suitable environment for growth of small and medium-size enterprises.

Economic and political developments, privatisation, labour market, social affairs and the general investment

climate are issues expected to be discussed at the conference which will highlight investment and export opportunities in Jordan as well as incentives brought about by the new set of economic legislations

in the country.

Mr. Sharaiha said that the EU Commission in Brussels organises two Europartenariat conferences each year. The first one was held in Genoa, Italy, and the second will be held in Greece on June 23-24.

H.E. Abdul Majeed Shoman presides over the seminar Arab Bank managers attend lectures on Asset Liability Management

Abdel Hamid Shoman emphasises importance of understanding the professional Asset Liability Management approach in future banking activities

AS PART of its continuous efforts to address developments in the banking industry, Arab Bank has organised a four-day seminar in Asset Liability Management at the Jordan Inter-Continental Hotel.

The seminar, which started on June 5, 1997, was presided over by H.E. Abdul Majeed Shoman, Chairman of the Arab Bank, together with Deputy President Mr. Abdel Hamid Shoman, and Dr. Farouk El-Kharouf, Director General of the Arab Bank Accountancy Division.

The seminar was held exclusively for Arab Bank regional managers in cooperation with Bant & Partners Consulting Limited, a specialist top level consulting firm which serves financial institutions worldwide.

Thirty participants represented Arab Bank branches in Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Greece, UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. The remaining thirty managers will be attending a similar seminar in September of this year.

This event comes as an integral step in



H.E. Abdul Majeed Shoman-Chairman & General Manager

accomplishing a comprehensive risk management system in the Arab Bank Group. The preparation started with the Bank's main financial centres in Singapore, New York, London, Bahrain and Switzerland. Other centres spanning 35 countries around the world have now joined this strategic programme. The Deputy President ended the seminar by emphasising the importance of understanding the professional Asset Liability Management approach in future banking activities.



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Answer: Because of this, the legal scholar read ancient works - THE "FINE" PRINT

Aqaba skydiving event concludes today

By Ghaila Alal
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Despite weather turbulence, participants in the World Skydiving Championship in Aqaba were able to proceed with competitions but failed to break the Parachuting Over 40 Society's (P.O.P.S.) record in group parachuting, Vice-President of the Royal Jordanian Parachute Club (RJPC) Samih Janakat Sunday told the Jordan Times.

"We could not manage to break the P.O.P.S. record in group parachuting (which reached to 100 people in a single jump in Spain in 1995). But we were able to put 54 people together and it worked nicely," said Janakat adding that participants will today try to set the record for Jordan.

The championship which concludes today, is the first-of-its-kind sporting event in the Arab World, and was organised by RJPC in cooperation with P.O.P.S. bringing together 300 civilian skydivers from all over the

world. Janakat explained that P.O.P.S. brings together members from all over the world once every two years in different countries depending on the country's compliance with the championship's conditions.

"Jordan was the ideal place for the championship, its good weather, blue skies, tourism and history made it eligible to host this event," Janakat said.

In the first three days of the championship participants performed display jumps and on June 4 performed single free falls, group scramble parachuting and group parachuting, Janakat added.

Participants had to perform individual jumps after which they were required to hit a target with a diameter of 15 centimetres, said Janakat, adding that each participant had five jumps. Teams consisting of five jumpers performed scramble parachuting with a different formations in each jump.

Janakat noted that a Jordanian participant is

expected to clinch 10th place in the "hit and rock" competition in which each participant had to jump, hit a target and run to a chair.

In another unique competition, jumpers who had never jumped together before, were required to perform a group jump while changing the formation every two seconds.

"These jumpers were different in weight and size, a fact that added to its difficulty," said Janakat.

Results of all competitions are scheduled to be announced today, he added.

According to Janakat, the championship was an unprecedented event in the Arab World, adding that a military parachuting championship was held in Abu Dhabi in 1995.

The Royal Jordanian Parachuting Club was established in 1996 for performing para gliding, parachuting, skydiving, and simulated jumping among other air sports.

Majoli gets first pot of gold

PARIS (AFP) — Iva Majoli's women's singles triumph at the French Open on Saturday netted her \$654,000, taking her career prize money to \$2.9 million.

Runner-up Martina Hingis pocketed \$327,000 to take her total earnings over the three million mark.

But both Saturday's finalists will have to stick around for a few years yet to catch up with the top earners in the sport.

Steffi Graf, a five-times winner at Roland Garros, became the second woman player to break through the \$20-million barrier after her first round win after Martina Navratilova.

Navratilova earned \$20,344,061 on the way to winning a record 167 singles titles.

Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain stands third in the all-time earnings list with \$11,845,151.

Majoli's win meanwhile ensured that two players won their first ever Grand Slam in the same year for the first time in 20 years.

Hingis having won her maiden championship at the Australian Open in January.

In 1978, three players claimed their first grand slam success. Martina Navratilova of the then Czechoslovakia won Wimbledon while Australia's Chris O'Neil won on home territory and Romania's Virginia Ruzici won at Roland Garros.

Spectacular Kuerten downs Bruguera to take French Open title

PARIS, JUNE 8 (AFP) — Unseeded Gustavo Kuerten became the first Brazilian ever to win a men's singles title at a Grand Slam tournament here Sunday when he defeated twice-champion Sergi Bruguera of Spain 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in a dramatic French Open final.

The 66th-ranked 20-year-old South American, playing in only his third grand slam tournament, showed no stage fright in front of a packed Roland Garros centre-court crowd and completed his win in 1hr 50mins.

The 20-year-old Brazilian, who received the trophy from former champions Bjorn Borg and Guillermo Vilas, immediately dedicated his victory to his late father and his coach Larri Passos.

He also thanked his family and friends packed in the players' box and the Brazilian fans in the stands for their support.

"It's just unbelievable," he said after his win. "This is the happiest day of my life."

Kuerten, who beat the 1995 champion Thomas Muster and defending champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov on his way to the final, is the first unseeded player to win the men's crown at Roland Garros since Mats Wilander in 1982.

His win here means that he will jump into the 'top twenty' — possibly as high as 16th place — when the new ATP rankings are published on Monday.



Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten reacts during his French tennis open final match against Sergi Bruguera of Spain at the Roland Garros stadium June 8. Kuerten defeated Bruguera 6-3 6-4 6-2 (Reuters photo)

(U.S.)/Natascha Zvereva (Blr. x1) bt Mary Joe Fernandez/Lisa Raymond (U.S. x5) 6-2, 6-3

Mixed doubles: Rika (Jpn.)/Mahesh Bhupathi (Ind. x16) bt Lisa Raymond/Patrick Galbraith (U.S. x1) 6-4, 6-1

Junior men's singles: Daniel Elsner (Ger.) bt Luis Horta (Per.) 6-4, 6-4

Junior women's singles: Justine Henin (Bel.) bt Cara Black (Zim.) 4-6, 6-4

Junior men's doubles:

Jos De Armas (Ven.)/Luis Horta (Per.) bt Arnaud Di Pasquale/Julien Jeanpierre (Fra.) 6-4, 2-6, 7-5

Junior women's doubles:

Cara Black (Zim.)/Trina Seljutina (Kaz.) bt Maja Matevzic/Katarina Srebotnik (Slo.) 6-0, 5-7, 7-5

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Women's Asian Handball Championship

S. Korea meet China for first place today

Japan third as Uzbekistan score 1st win

By Roufan Nahhas and Khaled Harh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Asian titleholders South Korea Sunday tied China with six points each but kept a lead on goal difference after beating Japan 36-18 (15-7) on the fifth day of the 6th Asian Women's Handball Championship which concludes today.

South Korea will now meet China for the first place today in a match worth watching. Japan finished third with four points and reserved a berth to play in the World Championship in Germany in August to which the top three Asian teams qualify.

The experienced South Korean team took control of the match from the beginning despite the endless trials of the Japanese team.

Depending on the fast hands and accurate passes of Korea's Jeong Ho and Soon Young the Korean team secured more goals to maintain their reign atop the championship.

On the other hand, the Japanese team was hasty in passing and missed a lot of shots at the Korean goal.

Korea's goal keeper Rang gave the Japanese team a hard time by saving direct

hits from the Japanese.

South Korea kept the pressure until the last second of the first half and ended it 15-7.

In the second half, the Japanese looked more active than usual but the Korean team played with different techniques and took control of the fast hands of the Japanese team.

Japan's Masama, Kamido and Sokihara tried their best to score more goals but the Korean goal keeper Rang superbly guarded her goal especially after the Japanese team pressured the Korean defence.

Korea seemed on their way to a clear win with no chance whatsoever for their opponents to close the gap.

Korea's Rang saved five direct shots in a row from and ended the match 36-18. In a later match, Uzbekistan registered their first win in the championship after beating Taipei 21-12

(12-6) in a tough match Sunday evening.

With this result Uzbekistan came in the fourth place with two points followed by Taipei in last place.

Held under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sumayya Bint Al Hassan, the competition grouped top teams including South Korea, Japan, China, Uzbekistan and Chinese Taipei. Kazakhstan declined participation for financial reasons.

While the Kingdom is hosting the event, the Jordanian team did not take part in the competition. But the Jordan Handball Federation hoped the event would benefit the national team who watching experienced Asian players in the competition

The championship is sponsored by the Asian Handball Federation.

Monday China vs. South Korea 6.15 p.m.

Standings

| Team | P | W | D | L | GF | GA | Pts |
|----------|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|-----|
| S. Korea | 3 | 3 | - | - | 122 | 44 | 6 |
| China | 3 | 3 | - | - | 88 | 55 | 6 |
| Japan | 4 | 2 | - | 2 | 88 | 91 | 4 |
| Uzbek. | 4 | 1 | - | 3 | 74 | 105 | 2 |
| Taipei | 4 | - | - | 4 | 46 | 123 | - |

Rangers, Brewers lose

KANSAS CITY (R) — Chili Davis homered from both sides of the plate, driving in five runs, to lead the Kansas City Royals to a 10-4 rout of the Texas Rangers.

In Chicago, Harold Baines' single with one out in the bottom of the 11th inning scored Dave Martinez and lifted the White Sox to a 1-0 victory over the Baltimore Orioles.

In New York, David Wells pitched eight scoreless innings and Charlie Hayes snapped a scoreless tie with a two-out RBI double in the seventh and scored on a single by Mark Whiten to lead the Yankees to a 2-0 victory over the Milwaukee Brewers.

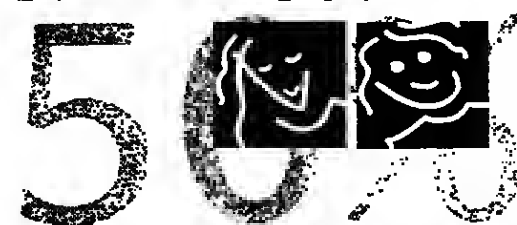
In Toronto, the Blue Jays beat the Oakland A's 3-1. In Boston, Bartolo Colon survived seven shaky innings to notch his first Major-League victory and Matt Williams snapped an 0-for-14 slump with his 14th homer as the Cleveland Indians beat the Red

Sox 9-5.

In Detroit, the Tigers ended a three-game losing streak with a 3-1 win over the Seattle Mariners.

At Minnesota, Brad Radke tossed a six-hitter for his first complete game of the season and five different hitters had at least two hits to pace a 13-hit attack as the Twins beat the Anaheim angels 6-1.

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Centre-right Ahern to be new Irish premier

DUBLIN (AFP) — Bertie Ahern expected to become Ireland's new prime minister heading a centre-right coalition government backed by a handful of independents, based on incomplete voting results late Sunday.

Mr. Ahern said moves to restore the Irish Republican Army (IRA) ceasefire would be a top priority of his government and he would seek a meeting with Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams this week.

Neither the outgoing centre-left coalition nor the opposition alliance will have the 84-seat majority needed to govern but the alliance was set to win a larger number of seats, allowing them to broker a deal with the independents.

"It is looking as if the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrats have a better chance of getting a majority," Prime Minister John Bruton conceded.

Mr. Ahern said he was certain he would realise his long ambition to be premier of this country of 3.5 million people. "It's going to be right enough but it has been a good result for Fianna Fáil. I am very pleased. We have done exceptionally well."

Four of the nine independents have strong leanings to Fianna Fáil which will help Mr. Ahern when he starts negotiating for support to form a "minority" coalition government.

They would be regarded as

part of the Fianna Fáil "stable" with strong sympathy for the party's policies.

By late afternoon Sunday 10 of the 166 seats in the parliament had still to be determined as counting continued in four of the 41 constituencies. Two involved recounts. Final results are expected late Sunday.

Mr. Ahern's alliance of his centre-right Fianna Fáil and the right-wing Progressive Democrats is expected to emerge with 81 or 82 seats.

Mr. Ahern said he looked forward to appointing party leader predecessor and former Premier Albert Reynolds as a special envoy for peace in Northern Ireland.

"I think the possibilities of moving things forward are really tremendous. But it is very hard to get anywhere as long as there is violence. I cannot do an awful lot of things I'd like to do unless there is peace."

The opposition alliance have been robbed of an overall majority by the collapse in the vote of junior partner, the Progressive Democrats.

Leader Mary Harney only just held her seat. She had been expected to be Ireland's first woman deputy prime minister but Mr. Ahern said Sunday that the issue had still to be discussed. The centre-right Fine Gael Party, led by Mr. Bruton, has made strong gains but the "Rainbow" coalition government is only expected to end up with a combined vote of about 76 as

the left-wing Labour Party has had heavy losses since its 1992 record showing.

Mr. Ahern said a hung parliament did not suit the political system, "but it is what the people decided and we have to live with that."

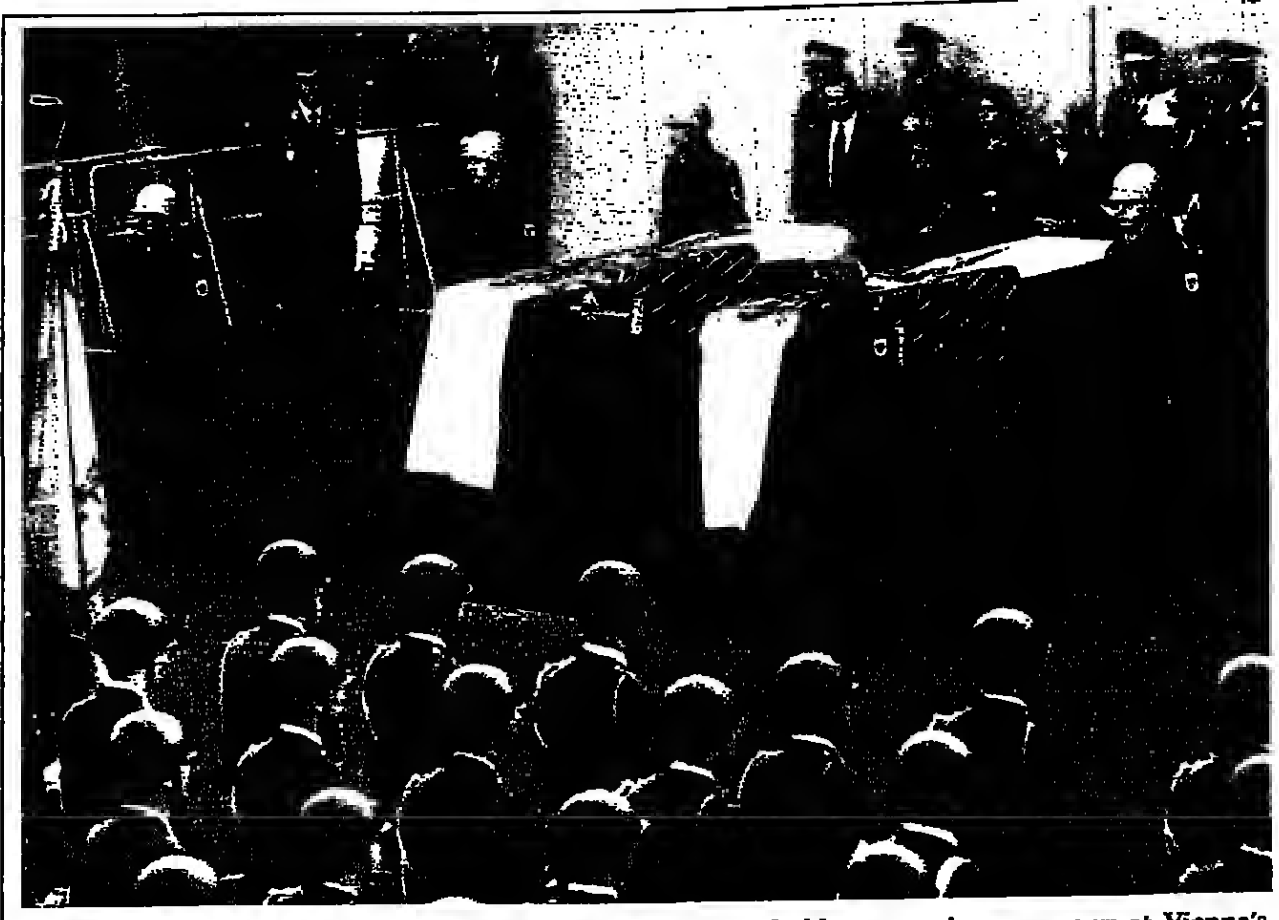
Mr. Ahern, who has served as labour and finance minister before he took over from Mr. Reynolds two years ago, is one of the most skilled negotiators on the Irish political scene and was central to the bargaining when Fianna Fáil was involved in two previous coalition governments.

Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin, the new Sinn Féin (the political wing of the IRA) MP who caused a sensation when he was elected in the first count in a constituency on the border with northern Ireland, would also be expected to favour the opposition alliance over the Rainbow.

Mr. Ahern and Mr. Bruton have already said they would not depend on Sinn Féin support to form a government in the absence of an IRA ceasefire.

"While I won't go seeking the Sinn Féin vote, I wouldn't refuse the support of anyone," Mr. Ahern said.

The 28th Irish parliament will reconvene on June 26 to elect a new prime minister while the independents present a "shopping list" for their own constituencies as the price for their support over the next five years.



WHO KILLED THE TWO SOLDIERS? Austrian U.N. troops hold a mourning ceremony at Vienna's Schwechat airport on June 4 for two colleagues killed last week in the demilitarised zone separating Israeli and Syrian lines on the Golan Heights. Syria accused the Israeli Mossad of killing the two soldiers Sunday, while Israel said that there were smugglers in the area, previously, Israel had accused Hizbollah of carrying out the murders (Photo by AFP)

Storm kills 20 in central China; 8 missing

BEIJING (R) — A thunderstorm in central China killed 20 people, left eight missing, destroyed more than 66,000 buildings and cut the main railway line from southern Guangdong to Beijing, officials said Sunday.

The storm disrupted traffic and power supplies in some areas of central Hunan province and floodwaters rose to the third storey of some buildings in the provincial capital, Changsha.

At least 20 people had died and eight were missing, said an official of the Flood Control Headquarters in Changsha.

More than 66,000 buildings in Changsha and surrounding counties had collapsed in the storm, which raged over the province for 10 hours Friday night and Saturday morning, dumping up to 297 millimetre of rain in some places, he said.

The main trunk line for trains running north from Guangdong province to the capital, Beijing, was cut for six hours in Jinguang county, but traffic resumed at about midday Saturday, he said. Losses from the storm were estimated at 1.3 billion yuan, he said.

Meteorologists said more heavy rain was expected in Changsha in the next two days. Floods, typhoons and fierce storms devastate large swathes of China nearly every summer, often causing hundreds of deaths and damaging vital crops.

Iran to sign chemical weapons ban treaty

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian parliament Sunday gave the go-ahead to the government to join an international convention banning the production and use of chemical weapons.

The measure had already been approved by the assembly's defence committee.

Several deputies in the 270-member assembly opposed the government proposal to join the convention on the grounds that it weakened Iran's position against "aggressive and hostile" countries in the region.

But most argued that production of weapons of mass destruction was against "Islamic and human values" and warned that not signing the convention could harm Iran's international image.

The decision to ban chemical weapons is expected to be taken in February 1998 in Paris, and it will pave the way for the destruction of existing stocks of such weapons and international inspections.

Tehran is repeatedly accused by Israel and the United States of seeking to build weapons of mass destruction, charges flatly denied by Iran, which itself was a victim of chemical

attacks by Iraq during their 1980-1988 war.

Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said Saturday that his country "hates nuclear and chemical weapons."

"Such weapons have always been deployed by anti-religion and anti-human countries which do everything for their illegitimate ends," he said, without naming any country.

"We are a formidable military force against any military aggression, but do not intend to attack any country," the president added.

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"We are a formidable military force against any military aggression, but do not intend to attack any country," the president added.

Israel's top rabbis reaffirm ban on prayer at Al Aqsa

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's two chief rabbis reaffirmed on Sunday the religious ban on Jews praying at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, site of the former Jewish temple destroyed by the Romans nearly 2,000 years ago.

"Jewish tradition prohibits us from praying at this site and nothing justifies calling this prohibition into question," said Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi Doron, chief of Israel's Sephardic community of Jews of north African and Asian descent.

"The best way to show respect for this site is to not go there," said Rabbi Doron

in remarks approved by Chief Rabbi Israel Lau of the Ashkenazi community of European Jews. The two clerics were inaugurating a new headquarters for the chief rabbinate in Jerusalem.

Ancient tradition bars Jews from visiting the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, which also holds the Dome of the Rock, for fear they may inadvertently come upon the "holy of holies" — the spot which was once the inner sanctum of the temple.

Entry to the holy of holies was restricted to the temple's high priest and contact

with the site would be a profanation if not preceded by complex purification procedures.

The exact location of the holy of holies was lost after the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 AD.

Despite the rabbinical ruling, Jewish extremists regularly attempt to enter the Al Aqsa compound to pray.

The most extreme groups dream of destroying Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock, the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, to rebuild the temple.

Pro-China figure outraged by 'doomsday' Hong Kong reports

HONG KONG (AFP) — A prominent pro-China figure here Sunday attacked Hong Kong Democrats and the foreign news media for spreading what he called a "doomsday prophecy" about the territory's July 1 return to Chinese rule.

People outside Hong Kong were ignorant of the situation in the lead-up to the handover and were inclined to believe negative reports and be cynical about the future under Chinese sovereignty, said Tsang Yok-Sing, leader of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong.

Foreign journalists sought comment from him only to get "views from the other side" when reporting the dire warnings of the pro-democracy lobby and told him to keep his comments short and simple so their audiences could understand, Mr. Tsang told government radio RTHK.

He said he would then spend two hours explaining the handover in detail, but whether the journalists

believed him or not they still carried negative reports.

"It is so much easier to tell the foreign audience the stereotyped story," he said, singling out reports on the territory's future legislature and planned restrictions on civil liberties.

Mr. Tsang is a member of the China-appointed Provisional Legislature, which is already passing laws and will replace the current elected Legislative Council on July 1.

One of the laws being considered by the incoming body would impose controls on political parties and restrictions on public demonstrations.

"Some local politicians seem to have made it their business to convince foreign governments, politicians and journalists that there will be no democracy, no rule of law, no independent judiciary in Hong Kong after the transfer of government," Mr. Tsang said, adding that foreign media reports meant many

overseas already believed this.

"Their doomsday prophecy is hardly necessary. People who listen to their ill-founded doomsday prophecy need not need their warning to feel cynical about Hong Kong's fate."

Mr. Tsang's comments followed an editorial in the official China Daily Thursday accusing British and U.S. media of misleading their overseas audiences with deliberately negative and distorted coverage of the handover.

Opinion polls and skyrocketing property prices in Hong Kong indicate a high level of confidence in the territory's future under Chinese rule, a commentary in the official China Daily said.

"But doom and gloom is the Hong Kong story line filed by British and American journalists," it said.

"One begins to wonder about the credibility of the Western media. What is their job? To inform or misinform the general public?"

Barak tightens grip on Israel's Labour Party

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Ehud Barak, a tough former army chief who was elected chairman of Israel's Labour Party last week, announced Sunday that he was also taking charge of the party's number-two post.

The man who formerly held the number-two job as party general secretary, Nissim Zivli, handed in his resignation after the June 3 internal elections which saw Mr. Barak easily beat three rivals to succeed former Prime Minister Shimon Peres as chairman of Israel's main opposition group.

Sunday Mr. Barak said he would take over Mr. Zivli's job himself for a four-month period, after which he would either organise elections for the job as had been done in the past or appoint an outside "technical director" to manage the party.

Mr. Barak, who represents Labour's hawkish right-wing, won election by presenting himself as the natural heir to slain former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, another ex-army chief, and the best placed politician to beat Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the polls.

The decision to expand his

authority in the party came amid a campaign by Mr. Barak to tighten Labour ranks after the recent leadership struggle.

The battle for chairman notably set him against Yossi Beilin, a key architect of peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

Mr. Barak met on Sunday with another leading figure from the party's left-wing, Haim Ramon, who did not run in the race for chairman.

He was scheduled to meet with both Mr. Peres and Mr. Beilin on Monday, party officials said.

Indonesia arrests 120 Timor rebels

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesian security officers have so far captured 120 members of the separatist guerrilla movement in troubled East Timor after a recent surge of violence over the country's general election period, the official Antara news agency reported Sunday.

At least 34 people died as a result of attacks by separatists seeking to disrupt the May 29 general elections, in which Indonesia's ruling Golkar Party swept 74 per cent of the vote nationwide, police have

said. Antara quoted East Timor Police Chief Colonel Jusup Mubaram as saying Saturday that security officers had so far arrested 120 separatist members following the attacks and confiscated guns, daggers, spears and amulets from them.

"Security officers have so far arrested 120 members of the separatist movement," said Col. Mubaram, adding that the hunt for the rebels continued.

Antara gave no further details. Police were not available for comment on the report.

In the most serious incident, separatists killed 16 policemen and a soldier in an ambush on May 31 as the group returned by truck after protecting election booths.

Another 17 people, including at least four rebels, died the day before the election and on the polling day, in election-related violence, police said.

Algeria's 'patriot' legend takes his seat in parliament

ALGIERS (AFP) — Having spent three years up in the Barbar mountains tracking down armed Islamic groups, Zidane Mekhfi has found a new job — in politics.

Algerians know Mr. Mekhfi best as the 62-year-old leader of one of the biggest of the government-armed local defence units, known as "les patriotes" (the patriots), to be found throughout the North African nation.

He first took up arms during the 1954-62 war for independence from France. He did it again after an Islamic insurgency erupted when the military in 1992 aborted an election that fundamentalists were set to win.

Now, following Thursday's legislative elections,

he is taking a seat in the national people's assembly as a member of the National Democratic Rally (RND), the party founded by allies of President Liamine Zeroual.

It promises to be a far cry from the days not so long ago when he dusted off his gun and went off after extremists hiding in the Barbar mountains, 120 kilometres southwest of Algiers.

It was there that armed Islamic groups held a congress in 1992 under the leadership of the man then considered their "General" Abdelkader Cheboubi, who has since died.

First alone, then with his children, Mr. Mekhfi was later joined by men of all ages and backgrounds to combat the groups who

sought to impose a reign of terror in the region.

"Can you remember," he would say during the election campaign, "those days when, every morning, we would pick up decapitated heads thrown onto the roads and streets?"

"When a wife can see her husband go out the door certain that he will come back, and when a husband who goes out can be sure of seeing his wife again — on that day, our mission will be accomplished," he said.

In many parts of Algeria, such as the Mitidja farming plains that lie behind Algiers and where many gruesome massacres have occurred, "les patriotes" favoured the RND, which at 155 seats was the highest winner in the National People's Assembly vote.

Today, Mr. Mekhfi's mountain men, armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles and four-wheel-drive vehicles, continue their patrols, even beyond the mountains.

His house, in Bouderbala village, is his headquarters, and behind the front door are some spoils of war — a "habbab," or home made mortar used by armed Islamic groups, and various explosive objects.

In the living room-cum-office hang pictures of 98 men, from teenagers to old men in their 70s, who have died in combat against fundamentalism — some recently, despite local assertions that the situation is under control.

"They died with weapons in hand," Mr. Mekhfi said, "defending their country and their honour."



Call girls fall victim to Amsterdam summit security

AMSTERDAM (R) — Amsterdam's call girls say they are being discriminated against by tight security surrounding the forthcoming meeting of European Union leaders in the Dutch capital, ANP news agency said on Saturday. The police have introduced strict controls on who will be allowed into the city's hotels, where hundreds of politicians and officials will be staying for the summit on June 16 and 17. Entry passes have been issued to caterers and other delivery firms, but escort agencies have been refused. "Our work must continue. If a client in one of these hotels wants our services, a girl must be allowed to visit," ANP quoted the owner of one agency, Club Non Stop, as saying.

Arnold out of hospital markets new Batman film

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Hollywood muscle-man Arnold Schwarzenegger didn't lose much time moving from the operating room to the talk show circuit to promote his latest movie, "Batman and Robin." The 49-year-old star of "True Lies" underwent surgery in April to correct a congenital heart valve condition. The audience on a recent Oprah Winfrey show wanted to find out whether the former body builder, was outfitted with a synthetic heart valve; or one from a pig. "I'm not going to say which valve I chose," Schwarzenegger told Oprah, "but now every time I see hacon, I start crying."

French youths print banknotes on home computer

STRASBOURG (R) — French police said on Sunday they had broken up a youthful ring of counterfeiters, comprised of seven high school students printing 100-franc and 200-franc bank notes on a home computer. "The 100-franc note was particularly successful," Gendarmes Captain Michel Balland in Thann, eastern France, told Reuters. Police said their counterfeiting had begun as a game. The students, from well-off families and with clearly advanced computer skills, scanned bank notes into their computer's memory, touched them up and then printed out the result on a high-quality laser printer. In all, they sold some 15 bank notes at 20 francs each until suspicious local merchants brought the bills to the attention of police, who tracked down the youths and brought them in for questioning.

Israeli woman appeals to court for 'basic right of prostitution'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli woman has appealed to the supreme court for permission to practice prostitution in her own home, the Maariv newspaper reported Sunday. The 48-year-old woman, who faces charges for providing sexual favours in her Tel Aviv apartment, insisted "the right to practice prostitution is known and protected as a fundamental right under the freedom of trade law." "Is our state so different from other countries, where prostitution is organised and allowed in apartments?" the unidentified woman told the newspaper. If the "basic right of prostitution" is taken away, the woman said, more women will be pushed into doing business with pimps who will take advantage of them.